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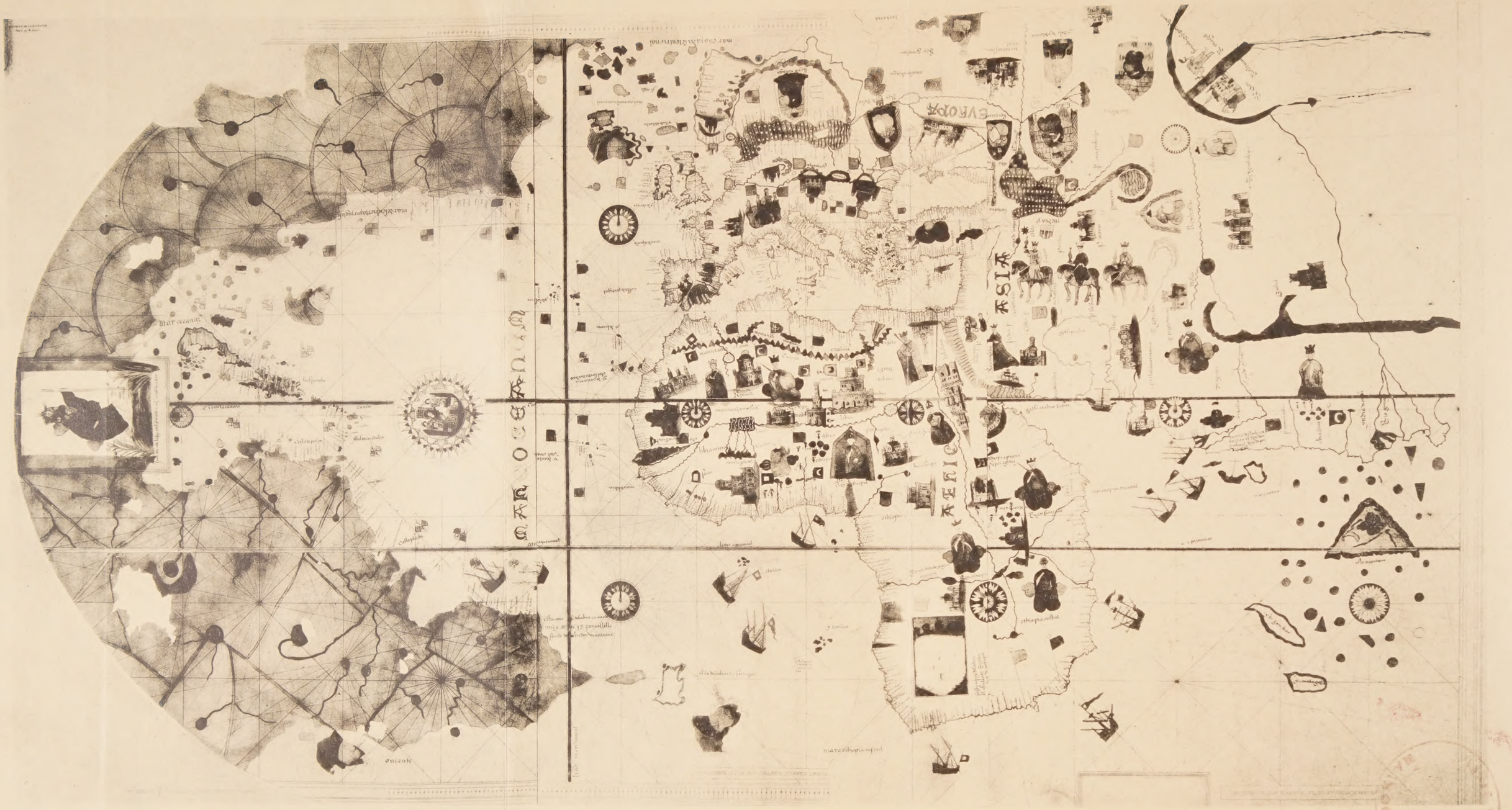
THE VOYAGES OF THE CABOTS

AND THE

ENGLISH DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA UNDER HENRY VII AND HENRY VIII

EDITOR: N. M. PENZER, M.A., F.R.G.S.



The Map of Juan de la Cosa

THE VOYAGES OF THE CABOTS

AND THE

ENGLISH DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA UNDER HENRY VII AND HENRY VIII

BY

JAMES A. WILLIAMSON, D.Lit.

Author of

Sir John Hawkins: the Time and the Man

A Short History of British Expansion

etc.

Illustrated with thirteen Maps

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PREFACE

MANY fundamental transactions of human history are obscure, but few are so imperfectly recorded as the discovery of the shores and islands of the Atlantic Ocean by European navigators. From the beginning the story is doubtful in many of its important aspects. In the fourteenth century the nearer islands and guesswork caricatures of Africa appear in maps, but written narratives are for the most part lacking. In the fifteenth century the written record becomes fuller, although often vague and broken at critical points. West Africa and its islands take firmer shape in the maps, and men speculate on the road to India. Then in the last years of the century comes discovery with a rush—of the Cape of Good Hope, the Antilles, South America, North America and Greenland; Diaz, Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci, Da Gama, Corte Real make them known, and year by year new promised lands float above the horizon, cloudy in outline, indefinite in nature, a problem to the eyes that first saw them, a problem ever since to those who have sought to interpret what the vision meant to its beholders.

The Columbian period of westward effort has become a cult with its initiates. The broad facts are plain, but little more. The preconceived ideas, the motives, the details, their sequence, the interpretation placed upon them, are disputable and offer problems of endless fascination. Maps exist and a few globes, to show how puzzling were the new facts to contemporaries. Their European and African coasts are well drawn, but those of the western Atlantic show merely that America became known. They ask, without answering, a series of questions. This northern shoreline, is it Labrador or Greenland? Or both, independently reported, and fused in the cartographer's mind? This channel, is it Davis Strait, or Hamilton Inlet, or perhaps the Gulf of St Lawrence? Did this explorer think he was following the coast of Cathay, or did he suspect a vast unheard-of continent? Who gave the names and planted the flags so early indicated on these shores? Such things the maps ask, and they are hard to answer.

The documents also are few and contradictory. Of the records of administration not a tithe have been preserved. The narratives are seldom from the pens of the explorers. They are written by home-staying scribes, often eager for truth, but relying on hearsay or disingenuous reports, distorted by prejudice or ignorance. There is no great central quarry of evidence. It crops up here and there in the archives of all Europe, in London, Lisbon, Seville, Venice, and sometimes in places less predictable

than these. Vienna has furnished manuscripts of Spanish discoveries, and Milan the best account of a voyage made from Bristol. A century ago little was known save the information obtainable from the printed books of the period itself. One by one the manuscripts have come to light, some by chance discovery, some by patient research. Finds are not frequent now; new records of the classic age of discovery are rarer than great diamonds. The most recently found document on John Cabot dates from 1897, and since then there have been but two new pieces revealed on the North American projects of his son. Yet the tale cannot be complete. In Portugal, France, Spain, perhaps in Italy, perhaps even in Scandinavia, there are unworked deposits still. The cult is vigilant to seize and print new finds as they occur, but an exhaustive search needs leisure and wealth. For the most part we must be content with vigilance and collect new gems as chance shall turn them up.

The present volume differs in form from the others of the series to which it belongs. There is no major narrative of the English discovery of North America comparable to Drake's *World Encompassed* or Ralegh's *Guiana*. The story lies in a heterogeneous collection of short pieces, administrative documents, contemporary letters, and extracts from histories and commentaries written in the sixteenth century. It has therefore seemed undesirable to present a general introduction and afterwards allow the material to tell its own tale. The introduction would be largely unintelligible without a prior reading of the evidence, and the evidence itself is a maze through which a century of scholarship has cumulatively outlined a path. The plan adopted is to print first the whole of the available material, sub-divided under headings which describe the successive transactions, and afterwards to attempt a systematic analysis and synthesis of the facts under corresponding chapter-titles. The reader is asked, before considering the treatment of any given voyage, to work over the evidence that bears upon it.

Admittedly this is not to offer light reading, but tough exercise for the critical faculties. Its appeal is to three classes of students: those who are old initiates of the subject and are ready (as all such must be) to do fresh battle over oft-disputed fields, those who are attracted by the mystery and fascination of these early probings of the unknown but have not yet seriously grappled with the problems involved, and those who as novices in the technique of historical research are setting out to learn the nature of evidence and the methods of criticism. The old hands will find here one or two crumbs of new or neglected information and some interpretations which may challenge their orthodoxy. For the newcomers there is

provided, for the first time it is believed, a complete collection of the texts, manuscript and printed, which are really relevant to the English voyages from 1497 to 1536, preceded by a selection illustrating the geographical knowledge of the fifteenth century. For their benefit also are included the dates of discovery of the various pieces of evidence, and indications of the views of others from which the present editor feels compelled to dissent. For the beginners in historical research in general the Cabot material offers an unrivalled field of training. The evidence is sufficiently limited in bulk to be fully set forth in one volume. It represents every category, from the first-class unconscious testimony of administrative documents to the interested claims of actors and propagandists, the disinterested reports of onlookers, the muddled statements of earnest but ill-informed students, and the mere chaff of third-hand hearsay and irresponsible theory, from which nevertheless some grains of truth may be extracted. Few other passages of English history offer so compact a practice-ground in the art and science of research. Those whose experience is limited to the selection of evidence from the vast and enervating fields of nineteenth-century material will find when they tackle the early voyages that they must exercise faculties they have barely dreamed of using hitherto.

This book owes much to the labours of others, and in particular of Dr H. P. Biggar, whose *Precursors of Jacques Cartier, 1497–1534*, has been freely drawn upon for its revised versions of many texts, and who has generously allowed the use of his additional transcripts from early authorities. The inclusion of the extracts printed on pp. 108–11, which were first published only in the present year, is due to the courtesy of Miss I. A. Wright and the Council of the Hakluyt Society. The sources from which other published documents are drawn will be found acknowledged at the conclusion of the several extracts. The line maps have been carefully drawn by Miss G. Heath from sketches or photographs of the originals. Miss E. G. R. Taylor, of Birkbeck College, has been kind enough to read the whole of the manuscript and to offer invaluable suggestions and corrections on the interpretation of maps and of early geographical ideas. Finally the author must express his great indebtedness to his colleague, Mr P. G. Wilson, whose knowledge of languages has provided translations of many foreign writings and elucidations of many difficult points.

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PART I

DOCUMENTS AND EXTRACTS FROM CONTEMPORARY WORKS

I. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

NO. I. NORSE VOYAGES TO AMERICA

Extracts from Sagas embodied in the Flatey Book, compiled in Iceland between 1370 and 1387; the Saga of Erik the Red, copied in Iceland in the early fifteenth century; and Hauk's Book, compiled in Iceland between 1299 and 1334.

[A.D. 1002.][1] There was now much talk about voyages of discovery. Leif, the son of Erik the Red of Brattahlid, went to Bjarni Herjulfson and bought the ship of him and engaged men for it, so that there were thirty-five men in all. Leif asked his father Erik to be the leader on the voyage, but Erik excused himself, saying that he was now well stricken in years and could not, as formerly, endure all the hardships of the sea.... So Erik went home to Brattahlid, but Leif repaired to the ship and his comrades with him, thirty-five men. There was a southerner[2] on the voyage, who was called Tyrker. Now they prepared their ship and sailed out into the sea when they were ready, and then found that land first which Bjarni had found last. There they sailed to the land and anchored and put off boats and went ashore, and saw no grass there. Up the country it was all great icebergs, but from the sea to the mountains it was like a plain of flat stones, and it appeared to them that this land had no good qualities. Then said Leif, "We have not done like Bjarni about this land, that we have not been upon it; now I will give the land a name and call it Helluland".

Then they went on board and sailed out to sea and found another land. They sailed again to the land and cast anchor, and then put off boats and went on shore. This land was flat and covered with wood, and white sands were far around where they went, and the shore was low. Then Leif said, "This land shall be named after its qualities and called Markland".

They then immediately returned to the ship. Now they sailed thence into the open sea with a north-east wind, and were two days at sea before they saw land. And they sailed thither and came to an island which lay to the eastward of the land, and went up there, and looked round them in good weather, and saw that there was dew upon the grass. And it so

[1] The chronology is adopted from G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Norse Discoverers of America*, Clarendon Press, 1921, from which work also the bibliographical information has been drawn.

[2] A German.

happened that they touched the dew with their hands and raised the fingers to the mouth, and they thought they had never before tasted anything so sweet. After that they went to the ship, and sailed into a sound which lay between an island and a cape, which ran out to the eastward of the land, and then steered westwards past the cape. It was very shallow at ebb tide, and their ship stood fast, so that it was far to look from the ship to the water. But so much did they desire to land that they did not give themselves time to wait until the water again rose under their ship, but ran at once on shore, at a place where a river flows out of a lake. But as soon as the water rose up under the ship they took their boats and rowed to the ship and floated up to the river and thence into the lake, and there anchored, and brought up from the ship their skin bags, and made booths. After this they took counsel and formed the resolution of remaining there for the winter, and built large houses....But when they had done with the house-building, Leif said to his comrades, "Now I will divide our men into two parties and have the land explored; and half of the men shall remain at the houses while the other half explore the land. But they shall not go further than that they can come home in the evening, and they shall not separate".

Now they did so for a time, and Leif changed about, so that one day he went with them and the other remained at home in the house. Leif was a great and strong man, grave and well-favoured, and sensible and moderate in all things. It happened one evening that a man of the party was missing, and this was Tyrker the southerner. Leif took this much to heart, for Tyrker had been long with his father and him, and had loved Leif much in his childhood. Leif now took his people severely to task and prepared to seek for Tyrker, and took twelve men with him. But when they had gone a short way from the house, Tyrker came towards them and was joyfully received. Leif soon saw that his foster-father was not in his right senses. Tyrker had a high forehead and unsteady eyes, was freckled in the face, small and mean in stature, but excellent in all kinds of craftsmanship. Then Leif said to him, "Why wert thou so late, my foster-father, and separated from the party?" He now spoke first and for a long time in German, and rolled his eyes about and twisted his mouth, but they did not understand what he said. After a time he said in Norse, "I have not been much further off, but still I have something new to tell of. I have found vines and grapes". "But is that true, my fosterer?" asked Leif. "Surely it is true," replied he, "for I was bred in a land where there is no want of either vines or grapes." They slept now for the night, but in the morning Leif said to his sailors, "We will now set about two

things, in that one day we will gather grapes, and the other day cut vines and fell trees, so from thence will be a lading for my ship". And that was the counsel taken, and it is said that their longboat was filled with grapes. Now a cargo was cut down for the ship, and when the spring came they got ready and sailed away. And Leif gave the land a name after its qualities and called it Wineland.

. . . . . .

[A.D. 1004–7.] Now there was much talk about Leif's voyage to Wineland, and Thorvald his brother thought that the land had been too little explored. Then Leif said to Thorvald, "Thou canst go with my ship, brother, to Wineland, if thou wilt, but I wish first that the ship should go and fetch the timber which Thorer had upon the rock". And so it was done.

Now Thorvald made ready for this voyage with thirty men, and took counsel thereon with Leif his brother. Then they made their ship ready and put to sea, and nothing is told of their voyage until they came to Leif's booths in Wineland. There they laid up their ship and spent a pleasant winter, and caught fish for their support. But in the spring Thorvald said that they should make the ship ready, and that some of the men should take the ship's longboat round the western part of the land, and explore there during the summer. The land appeared to them fair and woody, and there was but a short distance between the wood and the sea; and there were white sands. There were many islands and much shoal water. They found neither dwellings of men nor of beasts, except upon an island to the westward, where they found a corn-shed of wood. But they found few works of men, and then they turned back and came to Leif's booths in the autumn. But next summer Thorvald went eastward with the ship, and round the land to the northward. Here a heavy storm came upon them when off a cape, so that they were driven ashore, and the keel of the ship was broken; and they remained here a long time and repaired their ship. Then Thorvald said to his companions, "Now I will that we fix up the keel here upon the ness, and call it Keelness", and so they did. After that they sailed away round the eastern shores of the land, and into the mouths of the friths that lay nearest thereto, and to a point of land which stretched out and was covered all over with wood. There they came to with the ship and pushed out a plank to the land, and Thorvald went up the country with all his companions. He then said, "It is beautiful here, and here I would like to dwell". Then they went to the ship, and saw upon the sands within the promontory three mounds, and went to them, and saw there three skin canoes, and three men under each. Then they divided their party and caught them all except one, who got away

with his boat. They killed the other eight, and then went back to the cape and looked round them, and saw within the frith some humps which they supposed to be dwellings. After that, so great a drowsiness came upon them that they could not keep awake, and all fell asleep. Then there came a shout above them, so that they all awoke, and the voice said, "Awake, Thorvald, and all thy companions, if thou wilt preserve life, and return to thy ship with all thy men, and leave the land without delay". Then there came out from within the frith an innumerable multitude of skin canoes, and made towards them. Thorvald said, "We will put out the battle-screen and defend ourselves as well as we can, but attack them but little". So they did, and the Skraelings shot at them for a time, but afterwards ran away as fast as they could. Then Thorvald asked his men if they had got any wounds. They answered that no one was wounded. "I have a wound under the arm," said he, "for an arrow flew between the gunwale and the shield, in under my arm, and here it is, and it will prove a mortal wound to me. Now I counsel you that you get ready instantly to depart, but you shall bear me to that cape where I thought it good to dwell. It may be that a true word fell from my mouth, that I should dwell there for a time. There shall you bury me and set up crosses at my head and feet, and call the place Crossness for ever in time to come." Greenland was then Christian, although Erik the Red had died before Christianity was introduced.

Now Thorvald died, but they did all things according to his will, and then went away and returned to their companions, and told each other the tidings which they knew, and dwelt there for the winter, and gathered grapes and vines to lade the ship. But in the spring they made ready to sail to Greenland, and came with their ship into Eriksfjord, and could now tell great news to Leif.

. . . . . .

[A.D. 1020–3.] In Brattahlid they began to talk much about exploring Wineland the Good, and it was said that a voyage thither would be very profitable by reason of the fertility of the land; and it went so far that Karlsefni and Snorri made ready their ship to explore the land in the spring. With them went also the men previously mentioned, Bjarni and Thorhall, with their ship....They had the ship which Thorbjorn had brought out, and they joined themselves to Karlsefni's party for the expedition, and the majority were Greenlanders. They had in all 160 men, when they sailed to the western settlement and thence to Bjanney. Then they sailed two days to the south. Then they saw land and put off boats and explored the land, and found there great flat stones, many of which

were twelve ells broad, and there were foxes there. They gave the land a name and called it Helluland. Then they sailed two days and turned from the south to the south-east, and found a land covered with wood, and many wild beasts upon it. An island lay out from the land to the south-east. There they killed a bear and called the place Bear Island, but the land, Markland.

Thence they sailed far to the southward along the land and came to a cape. The land lay to starboard, and there were long and sandy strands. They rowed in and found there upon the ness the keel of a ship, and called the place Keelness, and the strands they called Furdustrands, for it was long to sail by them. Then the land became indented with coves, and they ran the ship into a cove.

. . . . . .

Now it is to be told about Karlsefni that he went to the southward along the coast, with Snorri and Bjarni and their people. They sailed a long time until they came to a river, which ran out from the land, and through a lake into the sea. It was very shallow, and they could enter the river only at high water. Karlsefni sailed with his people into the mouth, and they called the place Hóp. They found there upon the land self-sown fields of wheat where the ground was low, but vines where it rose somewhat. Every stream was full of fish. They made holes where the land began and the waters rose highest; and when the tide fell there were halibut in the holes. There were numbers of all kinds of wild beasts in the woods. They remained there a fortnight and amused themselves, and did not perceive anything notable. They had their cattle with them.

And one morning early, when they looked round, they saw nine skin canoes, and poles were swung upon them, and it sounded like the wind in a straw-stack, and the swinging was with the sun. Then said Karlsefni, "What may this mean?" Snorri Thorbrandson answered him, "It may be that this is a sign of peace, so let us take a white shield and hold it towards them". And so they did. Upon this the others rowed towards them and looked with wonder upon those they met, and came upon the land. These people were swarthy and ill-favoured, and had coarse hair on their heads. They had large eyes and broad cheeks. They stayed for a time and gazed upon those they met, and afterwards rowed away southward round the cape.

. . . . . .

At the end of that time [three weeks] a great number of Skraelings' boats were seen coming from the south like a rushing torrent. All the poles were turned from the sun, and they all yelled very loudly. Then

Karlsefni's people took a red shield and held it towards them. The Skraelings jumped out of their boats, and then they went against each other and fought. There was a shower of missiles, for the Skraelings had slings. Karlsefni's people saw that they raised up on a pole a large ball, like a sheep's paunch, and of a blue colour. This they swung from the pole over Karlsefni's men, and it made a frightful crash as it fell upon the ground. This caused great fear to Karlsefni and his men, so that they thought of nothing but running away, and they fell back along the river, for it seemed to them that the Skraelings pressed them from all sides. And they did not stop until they came to the rocks where they made a stout resistance.... Karlsefni and his people now considered that although the land had many good qualities, yet they would always be exposed then to the fear of war with the inhabitants. They decided therefore to depart and return to their own country....When they sailed from Wineland they had a south wind, and came then to Markland, and found there five Skraelings, and one was bearded. Two were females, and two boys. They took the boys, but the others escaped and disappeared into the ground.

Translation from N. L. Beamish, *The Discovery of America by the Northmen*, London, 1841, with some emendations suggested by G. M. Gathorne-Hardy's work already noted.

NO. 2. BRISTOL TRADE WITH ICELAND IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

From the Bristol Customs Records in the Public Record Office.

E. 122. 161/31. Undated ledger, temp. Hen. VI.

The bark called the John the Evangelist in which Germanus Lynch is master came from Iseland the xijth day of June and has in it

for Thomas Rowley, denizen, iiij lastes and a half of salt fish, value xlv pounds, subsidy xlv shillings

for the same, v lasts giltfissh, value xxv pounds, subsidy xxv shillings

for the same, j last and ij hundredweight titeling, value lx shillings, subsidy iij shillings[1]

[The *Ive* of Bristol arrived from Iceland on the same day.]

E. 122. 19/1. Ledger, 1 Ed. IV.

[1461.] The ship called the John of Fowey in which Hugh Davy is master came from Norbarn on this day [August 20] and has in it

[1] The entries are partly in Latin and partly in English. For uniformity with other documents printed in this volume, the Latin is here translated, although not into fifteenth century English. Hence the discrepancies in spelling.

for John Jay, denizen, vij last stokffish, value xxxv pounds, subsidy xxxv shillings;

for the same, ij last tetelyng, value v pounds, subsidy v shillings;

[Several more merchants imported fish in this ship, and two other vessels arrived from Norbarn on the same day.][1]

E. 122. 19/7. Ledger, 10 Ed. IV.

[1471.] The ship called the Antony of Bristol in which John Deanfitz is master came from Islond on this day [September 10] and has in it

for John Forster, denizen, xxxv last lyng, value lxx pounds, subsidy lxx shillings

for the same, xv last stokfysshe, value lxxv pounds, subsidy lxxv shillings

for John Gregorie, denizen, j last salt fish, value x pounds, subsidy x shillings

E. 122. 19/11. Ledger, 15 Ed. IV.

[1476.] The bark called the Mary Byrde in which William Orner is master sailed for Iseland the xxvijth day of April and has in it [a general cargo laded by John Godeman].

E. 122. 19/13. Controlment, 17–18 Ed. IV.

[1478.] The ship called the Antony of Bristol in which John Brislie is master sailed for Iselond on this day [March 6] and has in it [general cargo for John Forster].

[1479.] The bark called the Ive of Bristol in which John Geough is master sailed for Iselond the xvijth day of February and has in it [general cargo for John Forster].

E. 122. 19/14. Ledger, 19–20 Ed. IV.

[1481.] The bark called the Leonard of Bristol in which John Gogh is master sailed for Iseland on this day [February 12] and has in it [general cargo for Dionisius Bracy].

[1481.] The bark called the Christopher of Bristol in which Thomas Sutton is master sailed for Iseland on this day [February 14] and has in it [general cargo for John Shipward].

E. 122. 20/5. Ledger, 1–2 Hen. VII.

[1486.] The ship called the Trinity of London in which Thomas Sutton is master came from Islonde on this day [Sept. 18] and has in it [fish and brimstone].

[1] Norbarn was in Norway, but the entry is given for its mention of John Jay, the father of the John Jay who promoted the westward voyage of 1480. See below, No. 7.

E. 122. 20/9. Ledger, 8–9 Hen. VII.

[1493.] The bark called the Michael, Robert Gege master, sailed for Island on this day [May 8].

[1493.] The bark called the Barbara, John Pembroke master, came from Island the xvth day of September.[1]

Here first printed.

NO. 3. THE SPHERE AND THE WESTWARD PASSAGE TO ASIA

From *Imago Mundi*, by Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly, written c. 1410, printed c. 1487.

The Eighth Chapter. Of the extent of the Earth that is habitable.

For the investigation of the extent of the habitation of the earth it must be understood that habitation is considered in two ways. In one way in respect of climate, or how much is habitable by reason of the sun's heat and how much is not, and of this we have spoken generally above. In another way it may be considered in respect of water, or to what extent it is hindered by water; and of this we are now to consider. Concerning which matter the opinions of the wise are varied. For Ptolemy in his book of the disposition of the sphere holds that about a sixth part of the earth is habitable with respect to water, and all the remainder is covered by water. And also in the second book of the Almagest it states that habitation is known in only a quarter of the earth, or that in which we live, whose length is from the east to the west and is half that of the equator, and its breadth is from the equator to the pole and is a fourth of the great circle. But Aristotle in the end of his book of the sky and the earth has it that more than a quarter may be inhabited. And Averroes confirms this. And Aristotle says that the sea is little between the farthest bound of Spain from the east and the nearest of India from the west. And he does not speak of the nearer Spain that is now commonly called Spain, but of the farther Spain that is now named Africa, of which certain authors speak, such as Pliny, Orosius and Isidore. Moreover Seneca in the fifth book of the things of nature says that this sea is navigable in a few days if the wind be favourable. And Pliny teaches in the second book on natural things that it is navigated from the Arabian Gulf to the Herculean Gades

[1] The above are examples of a larger number of entries relating to Bristol trade with Iceland. There is no possibility of confusion with Ireland, for that country is always given as Hibernia. The customs records are incomplete for Edward IV and become merely fragmentary for Henry VII.

in no very great time. Whence, from these and many other reasonings, on which I shall touch more fully when I speak of the Ocean, some conclude that manifestly the sea is not so great that it can cover three-quarters of the earth.[1] The authority of Esdras in his fourth book supports this, who says that six parts of the earth are inhabited and the seventh is covered with the waters; the authority of which book the saints held in reverence and confirmed the sacred truths by it. And therefore it seems that although the extent of habitation known to Ptolemy and those who follow him may be confined within a fourth part, more nevertheless is habitable. And Aristotle could have known more about this by the aid of Alexander, and Seneca by that of Nero, who were both accustomed to investigate the uncertain things of this world, as Pliny states of Alexander in his eighth book, and Solinus also, and Seneca tells of Nero in his book of natural things. Whence it seems that more trust is to be placed in them than in Ptolemy and also in Albategnus, who states that even less is habitable, namely the twelfth part only; but proof is lacking for that to be advanced. But for brevity I pass on, and also because the unfolding of this matter will better appear in what follows. From the foregoing therefore, and from what is to be said below, it appears that the habitable earth is not round like a disc as Aristotle says, but is as the fourth part of the surface of a sphere, of which fourth the two outermost parts are to some extent cut off, namely those which are not inhabited by reason of too great heat or cold. And this cannot be shown as conveniently in a plane as in a spherical diagram.

NO. 4. FIFTEENTH-CENTURY INDICATIONS OF UNKNOWN LANDS IN THE ATLANTIC

From Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, lib. 1, cap. xiii.

Christopher Columbus says then, amongst other things that he wrote in his notebooks, that speaking with mariners, various persons who were accustomed to navigate the western seas, especially to the islands of the Azores and Madeira, amongst others a pilot of the King of Portugal, named Martin Vicente, told him that, finding himself on one occasion 450 leagues to the west of Cape St. Vincent, he saw and took into his ship from the sea a piece of wood artificially worked, and, as he judged,

[1] There are other passages in d'Ailly's work which emphasize this idea of the shortness of the distance across the Atlantic to India. See Fortunato de Almeida, *La découverte de l'Amérique*, Coimbra, 1913, *passim*.

not by means of an iron tool, from which circumstance, and because there had been west winds for many days, he imagined that this timber came from some island or islands lying to the westward. Also another man named Pero Correa, a brother-in-law of the same Christopher Columbus, married to his wife's sister, informed him that in the island of Puerto Sancto he had seen another piece of wood which had come with the same winds and was fashioned in the same shape, and that he had also seen very large canes which could contain in their cavities three measures[1] of water or wine; and Christopher Columbus says that he heard the King of Portugal say this, speaking with him on those matters, and that the King ordered the canes to be shown to him (Columbus). And he held for certain (said Columbus) that the said canes were from some islands or island which was not very distant, or were brought from the Indies by the force of the wind and the sea, since in all our parts of Europe there are none, or at least he did not know that there were any like them. It confirmed him in that belief, that Ptolemy, in Book I, cap. 27 of his *Cosmographia*, says that such canes were to be found in India.

Again it was made known to Columbus by some inhabitants of the Azores that when the wind blew strong from the west and north-west the sea brought certain pine-trunks and deposited them on the coasts of those islands, especially in the islands of Graciosa and Fayal, there being no part of those islands which grew pines. Others told him that in the isle of Flores, which is one of the Azores, the sea had brought up the bodies of two dead men who seemed very broad in the face and of an appearance different from that of Christians. Another time, they say that in the Cabo de la Verga, which is in——,[2] and in that neighbourhood, they saw hollowed trunks or canoes with a moveable covering, which by chance, passing from one island or place to another, the force of the winds and the sea brought thither, and those whom they carried, not being able to turn back, perished, and the canoes, since they never sink, came to land in time at the Azores.

In the same manner a certain Antonio Leme, dwelling in the island of Madeira, told him that having sailed once with his caravel far to the westward, he had seen three islands to which he came close, which may have been true or not; at least they say that there were many reports among the people, especially in the islands of Gomera and Hierro, and many in the Azores affirmed and swore, that every year certain islands were seen towards the west. To that Columbus said that they might be the islands of

[1] *Azumbre*, a measure of about half a gallon.

[2] Blank in original.

which Pliny declares in Book II, cap. 97 of his *Natural History*, that towards the north the sea washes away certain woods from the land, which have such great roots that it carries them like rafts upon the water, which from a distance resemble islands. Seneca supports that, who says in Book III of *Naturalia* that there is a kind of stones so porous and light that in India they form as it were islands which go floating on the water, and of the same sort must be those which they call St. Brandan's, in whose history they say that he read that there were many islands seen on the sea about the isles of Cape Verde and the Azores, which were always burning and must be like those above mentioned: there is a notice of the same in the book named *Inventio fortunata*.

Moreover, Columbus says that in the year 1484 he saw in Portugal that an inhabitant of the island of Madeira came to seek from the King a caravel to go to discover a certain land that he swore he saw every year and always in the same manner, in which he agreed with the people of the Azores. Whence it followed that, in the charts made in times past, there were depicted certain islands in that sea and vicinity, especially the island called Antilla, and they placed it little more than 200 leagues west of the Canaries and the Azores. This was the judgment of the Portuguese, and to this day they do not forsake the opinion that it may be the island of the Seven Cities, the fame and desire of which has reached us also, and has caused many to act foolishly in quest of it and to expend much money with no profit and with great loss, as, if God pleases, will appear in the course of this history. This island of the Seven Cities, say the Portuguese, according to report, was peopled by them at the time when Spain was conquered in the reign of the King Don Rodrigo; and they say that to escape that persecution seven bishops and many people embarked, and with their ships came to land at the said island, where each of them made his settlement, and lest the people should think of turning back they set fire to the ships. And it is said that in the time of the Infante Don Enrique[1] of Portugal there ran there a storm-driven ship which had sailed from Oporto and did not stop until it came there, and when they landed those of the island took them to the church to see if they were Christians and used the Roman ceremonies, and seeing that they were, they asked them to stay there until their lord should come, who was some distance away, but the sailors, fearing lest they should set fire to the ship and detain them there, suspecting that they did not desire to be known by anyone, returned to Portugal very gladly, hoping to receive a reward from the Infante; whom, they say, he ill treated and ordered them to go back, but the master

[1] Henry the Navigator, d. 1460.

and the others dared not do so, for which reason, once out of that kingdom they never again returned there: they say also that the sailors gathered certain earth or sand for their cook-room, and found that great part of it was gold.

Some have started from Portugal to seek that land which, by common use, is called Antilla, amongst whom sailed one named Diego Detiene, whose pilot, Pedro de Velasco, an inhabitant of Palos, assured the same Christopher Columbus, in the monastery of Sancta María de la Rábida, that they had set out from the island of Fayal, and went 150 leagues with the *viento lebechio*, which is the north-west wind, and on putting about they discovered the island of Flores, guiding themselves by the numbers of birds they saw flying thither, for they recognized them as land birds and not seabirds, and so they judged that they must go to some land to sleep. Afterwards, they say, they went so far to the north-east that they reached Cape Clear, which is in Ireland towards the east, where they observed the west winds to blow very strongly and the sea was very smooth, from which they believed that it must be because of the land that must be there, which gave shelter in the western direction; which they did not follow up by going to discover it, for it was in August, and they feared the onset of winter. This, it is said, was forty years before Columbus discovered our Indies. In agreement with this is what a decrepit sailor told the said Columbus, in the port of Santa Maria, that in a voyage that he had made to Ireland he had seen a land that others believed to exist there, and they imagined it was Tartary which projected that way by the east, which I believe truly was that which we now call the Bacallaos, which they could not approach on account of the terrible winds.

Again, a sailor named Pedro de Velasco, a Galician, told Columbus in Murcia that, going on an Irish voyage they were sailing and running so much to the north-west that they saw land to the west of Ireland, and those who were in that voyage believed it must be what a certain Hernan Dolinos sought to discover, as shall presently be told. A Portuguese pilot named Vicente Diaz, an inhabitant of Tavira, making from Guinea for the island of Terceira in the Azores, having passed the locality of the island of Madeira, and running westwards, saw or seemed to see an island which he was certain was veritable land; and he, coming to the said island of Terceira, told the secret to a very rich Genoese merchant, a friend of his, whose name was Lucas de Cazana, whom he persuaded earnestly to fit him out for that discovery, with all things that were necessary; who, after having obtained licence from the King of Portugal to do so, sent security for his brother Francisco de Cazana, living in Seville, to equip a vessel with all

speed and deliver it to the said pilot Vicente Diaz; but the said Francisco de Cazana frustrated the design and would not accomplish it. The pilot returned to Terceira, and then the said Lucas de Cazana equipped him, and the pilot set out three or four times to seek the said land to a distance of a hundred leagues and more; and now he could find nothing, so that the pilot and his backer lost hope of ever finding it. And in his notebooks Columbus relates all this, which the same brother Francisco de Cazana told him, and he added further that he had seen two sons of the captain who discovered the said island of Terceira, who were named Miguel and Gaspar Corte-Real, go at different times to seek that land, and that they perished in the quest one after the other without anything being heard of them.

NO. 5. PORTUGUESE PROJECTS FOR FINDING THE SEVEN CITIES AND OTHER ATLANTIC ISLANDS

From the Archives of the Torre do Tumbo at Lisbon.

[1462.] Dom Affomsso[1] etc., to all who shall see this charter we make known that the Infante Dom Fernando my very esteemed and beloved brother has informed us that one Guomçallo Fernamdez, an inhabitant of Tavira, coming from the fisheries of the Rio de Ouro in the direction north-west of the Canary Islands and the island of Madeira, had sight of an island, and because the weather was contrary he could not land on it, which [island] my said brother sent to discover by certain signs that they gave him of it, and they did not find it; and that inasmuch as he now wishes to send again to seek it, [and] asks us that by favour we shall give it thus and in the form in which we have given him the other seven isles that Diego Affomso, his esquire, found near Cape Verde: and that we, having seen his petition begging [us] to make him grace and grant, we hold it for good, and we bestow the said island that he has found, or that may at any time be found by his ships or by any others whatsoever in the said region. And we desire that he shall have and hold it from us fully, with all dues and rights and power of justice, thus and in the manner that he now has and holds the said seven isles of which we have made him grant. And meanwhile we order all our magistrates, judges and officers of justice, and persons to whom the knowledge of these presents pertains and to whom this our charter may be shown, that they accomplish it and observe it and cause it to be accomplished and observed as if in there is

[1] Affonso V, 1438–81.

contained and has been contained [what is] in the other charter of grant that we have made to him of the seven isles, without there being placed on it hindrance or doubt, for thus and not otherwise he holds our grant. Given at Lisbon the twenty-ninth of October in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1462.

[1475.] Dom Affomso, etc. to all who shall see this my charter I make known that I have made a grant by a charter of mine to Fernam Tellez, governor and chief majordomo of the Princess my very beloved and esteemed daughter, of any islands to be discovered by him, and by his ships or men that he sends for this purpose, or that go to seek them for him, provided that they (the islands) be not in the seas of Guinea. According to what at greater length is contained in the said charter it does not make clear [whether they be?] uninhabited islands and those which the said Fernam Tellez by himself or others may cause to be peopled. And it might happen that, in thus sending out to seek them, his ships or people might find the Seven Cities or some other inhabited islands which at the present time have not been navigated to or discovered or traded with by my subjects, and it might be said that the grant I have thus made must not extend to them on account of their being thus inhabited. I declare by this my [present] charter that my intention and purpose then at the time I thus gave them was that the said charter comprises islands both inhabited and uninhabited, and that it is my pleasure that he shall have in them all the lordship and jurisdiction and power over the inhabitants, and for them the same privileges and liberties, that I gave by the said charter for the inhabitants of the other islands.[1] And in case he should wish to forbid that any persons of my kingdoms and lordships, and of any others whatsoever, should enter or go to them without his licence or authority, and [only] by contract that they may make with him, as I granted to the Infante Dom Amrique my uncle,[2] whom God have in his keeping, and now have granted to the prince my most beloved and esteemed son, I decree, desire, order and forbid all my said people and subjects, and all others of whatsoever nations they may be, that without licence, authority and orders of the said Fernam Tellez they shall not go to nor enter any inhabited islands whatsoever that may be discovered by the said Fernam Tellez or his ships or people, in the same manner that I have forbidden it in Guinea. And this on condition that the said islands shall not be in the seas adjoining Guinea which I have already given to my said son, and shall not hitherto have been traded with or visited by

[1] I.e. those to be peopled by Tellez.

[2] Henry the Navigator, who had died in 1460.

my subjects of these my realms of Castile and Portugal. And I desire and command all my officers of justice that, against those who shall do the contrary and shall trespass against this my charter of prohibition and command, they shall fully execute and cause to be executed all the penalties set forth and imposed on those who without licence of my said uncle should have gone to Guinea or who now should go without the licence of my said son; because thus it pleases me that it shall be done and accomplished by the said Fernam Tellez, who has the desire to send to seek and discover them and to take care that if they should be found great advantage may come to my realms. And also, because the said Fernam Tellez has done for me in the said realms so many and signal services, I am pleased to do him this and much greater favours, and it is my pleasure and desire that all this shall thus be observed and accomplished from now and for all time. And in witness of the same I order him to be given this charter signed and sealed with the seal. Given in the Chamber the tenth of November at the date of 75 years.

[1486.] Dom Joham[1] etc., to all who shall see this our charter we make known that we have seen a deed of contract and gift made between Fernam Dulmo and Joham Afomso do Estreito, an inhabitant of the island of Madeira, the tenor of which is word for word as follows: In the name of God amen, know you who shall see this deed of contract that in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1486, on the 12th of July in the city of Lisbon, there appeared in the Notarial Bureau Fernam Dulmo, gentleman of our lord the King's household and Captain of the island of Terceira, who now goes as captain to discover the Island of the Seven Cities by order of our lord the King; and there appeared also Joham Afomso do Estreito, an inhabitant of the region of Funchal in the island of Madeira, and thereupon the said Fernam Dulmo presented to me the notary a document of the following tenor: Dom Joham, by the grace of God King of Portugal and of the Algarve on this side of the sea, and on the other in Africa Lord of Guinea, we make known that Fernam Dulmo, gentleman and Captain in the island of Terceira for the Duke Manuel my very esteemed and beloved cousin, came now to us and told us how he wished to discover a large island or islands or mainland by the coast, which is supposed to be the Island of the Seven Cities, and all this at his own cost and expense, and that he prayed us that we should make him a grant and royal donation of the said island or islands or mainland that he, or another by his orders, may thus discover or find; and so we grant him

[1] John II, 1481–95.

the right of all justice, with power of death and of all other penalties of the said island etc. [continues with details of grant].

Original Portuguese printed in *Memoria historica sobre o intendado descobrimento nos annos 1649–1770*, by Bernardino José de Senna Freitas, Lisbon, 1845, Appendix, Documents B, E and G.

NO. 6. BRISTOL TRADE WITH MADEIRA

From the Bristol Customs Records in the Public Record Office.

E. 122. 19/14. Ledger, 19–20 Ed. IV.

[1480.] The bark called the Mawdeleyn of Kimperley [Quimperlé] in which Johannes de Chayston is master sailed for Madeira the xviijth of May and has in it [cargo for English merchants].

E. 122. 20/5. Ledger, 1–2 Hen. VII.

[1486.] The bark called the Mare Petat in which Lusianus is master came from Madeira the xixth of September and has in it [sugar and bow-staves for various Portuguese merchants, including "Gunsalus" and "ffornandus", their Christian names not given].

Here first printed.

NO. 7. JOHN LLOYD'S SEARCH FOR THE ISLAND OF BRASIL, 1480

From the *Itinerarium* of William of Worcester.

John Jay the second husband of my sister Joanna died on the 15th of May in the year of Christ...the son of Robert Ash of about the age of... years died on the 19th. of September and is buried in the Church of Saint Thomas.

1480, on July 15, the ship...and of John Jay the younger, of the burden of 80 tons began a voyage from the port of the Kingrode of Bristol to the island of Brasylle in [i.e. beyond] the western part of Ireland, to traverse the seas for...and Thlyde[1] [Lloyd] is the most expert shipmaster of all

[1] Harrisse assumes that "Thlyde" is equivalent to "Th[omas] Lloyd". The Bristol customs ledgers, however, show that this is unwarranted. "Thlyde" is a phonetic rendering of "Lloyd", and the Christian name was John. He occurs in E. 122, 19/1 as "John Thloyde"; in E. 122, 19/4 as "John llode" and "John lloid"; and in E. 122, 19/10 A as "John lloyd". All these entries are of the reign of Edward IV.

England; and news came to Bristol on Monday the 18th of September that in the said ship they sailed the seas for about nine [*sic*] months, and did not find the island, but were driven back by storms to a port...in Ireland for the refreshment of the ship and the men.

Original MS. (Latin) at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; printed in *Itineraria Symonis Simeonis et Willelmi de Worcestre*, by James Nasmith, Cambridge, 1778, p. 267. The *lacunae* represent defects in the MS. H. Harrisse, in *The Discovery of North America*, London, 1892, p. 659, collated Nasmith's text with the original and supplied one or two corrections.

II. THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN AND SEBASTIAN CABOT

NO. 8. JOHN CABOT'S NATURALIZATION AT VENICE

From the Archivio di Stato at Venice.

1476, March 29. That a privilege of citizenship, both internal and external, be made out for John Cabot on account of fifteen years' residence, as usual. Ayes, 149. Noes, 0. Neutrals, 0.

Terms of the privilege (from another document from the same source).

That since whoever has resided in Venice continuously for fifteen years or more, and during that period has fulfilled the duties and borne the charges of our government, is to be henceforward a citizen and one of our Venetians, and is to enjoy for ever and everywhere the rights, liberties and immunities exercised and enjoyed by the other Venetians, our citizens: wherefore as the prudent man [name inserted] has notified us by proper and clear proofs which have been carefully verified by the magistrates of our municipality, that he has inhabited Venice continuously for fifteen years, conducting himself towards us and our duchy faithfully and worthily, with whole-hearted devotion, and submitting regularly to the duties and charges of our government, things worthy of reward, we have received and do receive the said person, the proper formality having been observed, as a Venetian and our citizen within and without, and have created and do create him a Venetian and our citizen within and without, and desire him to be and act and be held and treated as a Venetian and our citizen in Venice and without, everywhere, in such a manner that the said person may for the rest freely enjoy and make use of all the liberties, rights and immunities that the other Venetians, our citizens, have and enjoy within and without, it being understood that he cannot himself trade or carry on trade through others by sea or in the German warehouse or with Germans, unless he has given security for this to our government within the year. In witness and more complete evidence whereof we have caused the present privilege to be drawn up, and our leaden seal to be affixed thereto. Given in our Ducal Palace on...in the year of our Lord's incarnation....

Original Latin with translations printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier, 1497–1534*, by H. P. Biggar, Ottawa, 1911, pp. 1–6.

Documents first printed in 1858 and 1880 respectively.

NO. 9. STATEMENT THAT JOHN CABOT WAS OF ENGLISH ORIGIN

From MS. notes in the Boston Public Library.

In the copy in the above library of *Ragguagli sulla vita et sulle opere di Marin Sanuto*, by Rawdon Brown, Venice, 1837, the author, who had made deep research in the Venetian archives, has inserted these manuscript notes. The documents to which he refers have not otherwise come to light.

Mr. Rawdon Brown will gladly show Mrs. R. E. Apthorp what he considers documentary evidence of John Cabot's English origin, and of his never having come to Venice (where he married a Venetian woman, who bore him Sebastian and his other sons) until the year 1461. Casa della Vida, Thursday, 2 p.m.

[*On another page*] I printed this in the year 1837; but in 1855–6 it became manifest, through documents discovered in the Venice Archives, that John Cabot really owed his birth to England.

Notes printed in *John and Sebastian Cabot*, by C. Raymond Beazley, London, 1898, pp. 293–4.

NO. 10. JOHN CORBET, JOHN DE SAVOT, JOHN CHAVET, AT BRISTOL, 1483–6

From the Bristol Customs Records in the Public Record Office.

E. 122. 20/1. Ledger, 1 Rich. III.

[1483, Aug. 19.] The bark called the Seint Spryte of Fontarabia, in which Johannes de Savot is master, sailed for Spain the xixth day of August.

E. 122. 20/5. Ledger, 1–2 Hen. VII.

[1485, Oct. 15.] The bark called the Michael of Bristol, in which Johannes Corbet is master, sailed for Welba [Huelva] the xvth day of October [with cargo of cloth for various merchants, including Robert Thorne and John Jay].

[1486, March 17.] The bark called the Michael of Bristol, in which Johannes Corbet is master, came from Welba on this day [with cargo of wine and oil for numerous merchants, including Robert Thorne].

[1486, Apr. 18.] The bark called the Michael of Bristol, in which Johannes Corbet is master, sailed for Andalusia the xviijth day of April [with cloth for various merchants, including John Jay].

[1486, June 18.] The bark called the Mary of Saint Sebastian, in which

Johannes Chavet is master, came from Spain on this day [with cargo, partly of iron, evidently from North Spain, for John Jay and others].

[1486, Sept. 18.] The bark called the Michael of Bristol in which Johannes Corbet[1] is master, came from Lisbon, the xviijth day of September [with cargo for numerous merchants, including Richard Warde, John Jay, and Robert Thorne].

Here first printed.

NO. II. SEBASTIAN CABOT IN 1556

From Stephen Borough's relation of a voyage to the North East.

The 27 [of April, 1556] being Munday, the right Worshipfull Sebastian Cabota came aboord our Pinnesse at Gravesende, accompanied with divers Gentlemen, and Gentlewomen, who after that they had viewed our Pinnesse, and tasted of such cheere as we could make them aboord, they went on shore, giving to our mariners right liberall rewards: and the good olde Gentleman Master Cabota gave to the poore most liberall almes, wishing them to pray for the good fortune, and prosperous successe of the Serchthrift, our Pinnesse. And then at the signe of the Christopher, hee and his friends banketted, and made me, and them that were in the company great cheere: and for very joy that he had to see the towardnes of our intended discovery, he entred into the dance himselfe, amongst the rest of the young and lusty company: which being ended, hee and his friends departed most gently, commending us to the governance of almighty God.

Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1903 ed.), II, pp. 322–3.

[1] Further mention of John Corbet occurs in E. 122, 20/7 (Controlment, 2–3 Hen. VII). There is no entry of any name resembling Cabot in the ledger of 1492–3 (E. 122, 20/9).

III. THE VOYAGES OF JOHN CABOT IN 1497 AND 1498

NO. 12. JOHN DEE'S STATEMENTS ON THE DATE OF THE DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA

From British Museum, Cotton MSS., Aug. I. i. 1., a Map of the North Atlantic drawn by John Dee in 1580. The statement printed below is extracted from matter written on the back of the map, and, as its internal evidence shows, was composed in 1578.

A brief remembrance of sundry forein Regions, discovered, inhabited and partly Conquered by the Subjects of this Brytish Monarchie: And so the lawfull Title of our Soveraigne Lady Queene Elizabeth for the due Clayme and just recovery of the same disclosed. Which (in effect) is a Title Royall to all the Coasts and Ilands, beginning at or about Terra Florida, alongst or nere unto Atlantis, going Northerly, and then to all the most Northen Ilands, great and small, and so compassing abowt Groenland untill the Territorie opposite, unto the fardest Easterly and Northern Bownds of the Duke of Moscovia his Dominions; which last Bownds are from our Albion more than half the Sea voyage to the Cathayen westerly and Northen Sea Coasts, as most evidently and at large yt is declared in the volume of Famous and Ryche Discoveries.[1]

Circa An. 1170. 1. The Lord Madoc, sonne to Owen Gwynedd Prynce of Northwales, led a Colonie and inhabited in Terra Florida or thereabouts.

Circa An. 1494. 2. Mr Robert Thorn his father, and Mr Eliot of Bristow, discovered Newfownd Land.

Circa An. 560. 3. Brandan, the learned man, discovered very much of the western parts: but chiefly Ilands, unto one of which he gave the name Brandan his Iland. And so is called at this present.

Circa An. 1497. 4. Sebastian Caboto, sent by King Henry the seventh, did discover from Newfownd Land so far along and abowt the Coaste next to Laborador tyll he came to the Latitude of 67½. And styll fownd the Seas open before him.

Anno 1576 et 1577. 5. The Ilands, and Broken land Easterly, and somwhat to the Sowth of Labrador were more particularly discovered and possessed A° 1576. and the last yere by Martin Frobysher Esquier: and presently is by our People to be inhabited: The Totall Content of which

[1] By John Dee.

Ilands and parcell of Land thereabowt by our Soveraigne Queene Elizabeth is lately named Meta Incognita.

The preamble and entries 2 and 4 printed in *Cabot Bibliography*, by G. P. Winship, London, 1900, p. 41. Here first printed in full.

NO. 13. ROBERT THORNE THE YOUNGER ON THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW FOUND LAND BY HIS FATHER AND HUGH ELYOT

From the Book addressed by Thorne to Dr Lee, English Ambassador in Spain, in 1527; in British Museum, Cotton MSS., Vitellius, c. VII, ff. 329–45.

ff. 339 b–340. I reason that as some sicknes[ses are] hereditarious and come [from the Father] to the Sonne: So this Inclynation or desyre of [discover]ing I inherited of my father, which with an[other] Marchaunt of Brystow named hughe Elliot [were] the discoverers of the Newfound Landes, of the w[hich] there is no dowt, (as now plainly appeareth) yf [the] mariners wolde then have bene ruled & followed the[ir] Pilots mynde, the Land of the Indians[1] from wh[ence] all the Gold commeth had bene ours: for all is one Coast, as by the Carde appeareth, and is afores[aid].

First printed by Richard Hakluyt in *Divers Voyages* (1582), with variations from the MS. Again printed by Hakluyt in 1589 and 1598 with further variations. The MS. itself is not Thorne's original, but a copy made for John Dee, c. 1577.

Here first printed from the Cotton MS. with the words in square brackets, which are burnt off MS., supplied from Hakluyt. Lansdowne MSS. 100, ff. 65–80 b, contains another copy which probably varies more widely from the lost original than does the Cotton MS.

NO. 14. THE SPANISH SOVEREIGNS TO GONZALES DE PUEBLA, 1496, MARCH 28

From the Spanish Archives at Simancas.

[Tortosa, March 28, 1496.] In regard to what you say of the arrival there of one like Columbus for the purpose of inducing the King of England to enter upon another undertaking like that of the Indies, without prejudice to Spain or to Portugal, if he [the king] aids him as he has us, the Indies will be well rid of the man. We are of opinion that this is a

[1] Hakluyt reads: "the lands of the West Indies". The original phrase makes it clearer that Thorne was referring to Mexico, recently conquered by Cortes.

scheme of the French King's to persuade the King of England to undertake this so that he will give up other affairs. Take care that you prevent the King of England from being deceived in this or in anything else of the kind, since wherever they can the French will endeavour to bring this about. And things of this sort are very uncertain, and of such a nature that for the present it is not seemly to conclude an agreement therein; and it is also clear that no arrangement can be concluded in this matter in that country [England] without harm to us or to the King of Portugal.

Original Spanish with translation printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 10–11.
First printed in 1862.

NO. 15. THE PETITION OF JOHN CABOT AND HIS SONS, 1496, MARCH 5

From the Public Record Office, Chancery Warrants for Privy Seal, Ser. II, 146.

Memorandum that on the fifth day of March, in the eleventh year of King Henry the Seventh, the following bill was considered by the Lord Chancellor of England at Westminster:

To the kyng our sovereigne lord:

Please it your highness of your moste noble and habundant grace to graunt unto John Cabotto, Citezen of Venice, Lewes, Sebastyan and Soncio, his sonnys, your gracious letters patentes under your grete seale in due forme to be made according to the tenour hereafter ensuying. And they shall during their lyves pray to God for the prosperous continuance of your moste noble and royall astate long to enduer.

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, p. 6.
First printed in 1881.

NO. 16. THE FIRST LETTERS PATENT GRANTED TO JOHN CABOT AND HIS SONS, 1496, MARCH 5

From the Public Record Office, Treaty Roll 178, membr. 8.

For John Cabot and his Sons.

The King, to all to whom, etc. Greeting: Be it known and made manifest that we have given and granted as by these presents we give and grant, for us and our heirs, to our well-beloved John Cabot, citizen of

Venice, and to Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio, sons of the said John, and to the heirs and deputies of them, and of any one of them, full and free authority, faculty and power to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea, under our banners, flags and ensigns, with five ships or vessels of whatsoever burden and quality they may be, and with so many and such mariners and men as they may wish to take with them in the said ships, at their own proper costs and charges, to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians. We have also granted to them and to any of them, and to the heirs and deputies of them and of any one of them, and have given licence to set up our aforesaid banners and ensigns in any town, city, castle, island or mainland whatsoever, newly found by them. And that the before-mentioned John and his sons or their heirs and deputies may conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands by them thus discovered that they may be able to conquer, occupy and possess, as our vassals and governors lieutenants and deputies therein, acquiring for us the dominion, title and jurisdiction of the same towns, castles, cities, islands and mainlands so discovered; in such a way nevertheless that of all the fruits, profits, emoluments, commodities, gains and revenues accruing from this voyage, the said John and sons and their heirs and deputies shall be bounden and under obligation for every their voyage, as often as they shall arrive at our port of Bristol, at which they are bound and holden only to arrive, all necessary charges and expenses incurred by them having been deducted, to pay to us, either in goods or money, the fifth part of the whole capital gained, we giving and granting to them and to their heirs and deputies, that they shall be free and exempt from all payment of customs on all and singular the goods and merchandise that they may bring back with them from those places thus newly discovered.

And further we have given and granted to them and to their heirs and deputies, that all mainlands, islands, towns, cities, castles and other places whatsoever discovered by them, however numerous they may happen to be, may not be frequented or visited by any other subjects of ours whatsoever without the licence of the aforesaid John and his sons and of their deputies, on pain of the loss as well of the ships or vessels daring to sail to these places discovered, as of all goods whatsoever. Willing and strictly commanding all and singular our subjects as well by land as by sea, that they shall render good assistance to the aforesaid John and his sons and deputies, and that they shall give them all their favour and help as well

in fitting out the ships or vessels as in buying stores and provisions with their money and in providing the other things which they must take with them on the said voyage.

In witness whereof, etc.

Witness ourself at Westminster on the fifth day of March.

By the King himself, etc.

Original Latin, with translation, printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 7–10.

First printed in 1582 (Hakluyt).

NO. 17. MAURICE TOBY'S ACCOUNT OF JOHN CABOT'S FIRST VOYAGE, 1497

From a Bristol Chronicle known as the Fust MS.

1496 [i.e. year commencing Sept. 15, 1496, the opening date of the Bristol civic year]. This year on St. John the Baptist's day the land of America was found by the Merchants of Bristow in a shippe of Bristow, called the *Mathew*; the which ship departed from the port of Bristowe the second day of May and came home again the 6th. of August next following.

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 194–5.

First printed in 1876.

NO. 18. THE *MATTHEW* OF BRISTOL IN 1503–1504

From the Bristol Customs Records in the Public Record Office.

E. 122. 199/1. Account, 19–20 Hen. VII.

[1503, Dec. 20.] The bark[1] called the Mathewe of Bristol in which Edmund Griffeth is master sailed for Ireland on this day and has in it [cargo, chiefly for Hugh Elyot].

[1] *Navicula.* Most of the customs records divide shipping into three classes: navis, navicula and batella. The word "navicula" thus stands for a ship of the smaller sort, such as was generally called a bark in the Tudor period. In this case, however, the meaning is not so certain, for this Account does not describe a single vessel as "navis", and it applies the word "navicula" to the *Gabriel*, which is known to have been of 120 tons (see No. 40). That was rather above the ordinary burden of a merchantman in the reign of Henry VII.

[1504, May 4.] The bark called the Mathewe of Bristol in which Edmund Griffeth is master came from Ireland on this day.

[1504, June 13.] The bark called the Mathewe of Bristol in which William Claron is master sailed for Bordeaux on this day.

[1504, Aug. 12.] The bark called the Mathewe of Bristol in which William Claron is master came from Bordeaux on this day.

[1504, Aug. 28.] The bark called the Mathewe of Bristol in which William Claron is master sailed for Spain on this day and has in it [cargo for a large number of merchants including William Thorne].

Here first printed.

NO. 19. STATEMENT INSCRIBED UPON THE WORLD-MAP OF 1544, NOW CALLED THE PARIS MAP

The 8th. legend: This land was discovered by John Cabot the Venetian, and Sebastian Cabot his son, in the year of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ 1494,[1] on the 24th. of June in the morning, to which they gave the name Land First Seen, and to a large island which is near the said land they gave the name Saint John, because it had been discovered on the same day. The people of it go dressed in the skins of animals; they use in their wars bows and arrows, lances and darts, and certain clubs of wood, and slings. The land is very barren. There are in it many white bears, and very large stags like horses, and many other animals; and likewise there is an infinite quantity of fish, sturgeons, salmon, very large soles a yard long, and many other kinds of fish, and the greater number of them are called baccallaos [codfish]; and likewise there are in the said land hawks, black like crows, eagles, partridges, linnets, and many other birds of different kinds.

Original inscription printed in both Spanish and Latin on the copy of the Map now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Hakluyt prints a Latin version differently worded but giving the same facts, evidently from another edition not now extant. The legends were also separately printed in Latin in a 24-leaf pamphlet, c. 1544.

The map was discovered in 1843 and purchased by the French government in the following year.

[1] In the Spanish version of the legend this date is rendered in Roman numerals, thus: M.CCCC.XCIIII. In the Latin version it is in Arabic: 1494. It has been suggested that the Spanish was that originally written by the author of the legend, and that the Latin was translated from it; and that the author actually wrote M.CCCC.XCVII. Careless penmanship would account for the printer's rendering of VII as IIII.

NO. 20. LORENZO PASQUALIGO TO HIS BROTHERS AT VENICE, 1497, AUG. 23

From the Venetian Archives.

[London, Aug. 23, 1497.] That Venetian of ours who went with a small ship from Bristol to find new islands has come back and says he has discovered mainland 700 leagues away, which is the country of the Grand Khan, and that he coasted it for 300 leagues and landed and did not see any person; but he has brought here to the king certain snares which were spread to take game and a needle for making nets, and he found certain notched [or felled] trees so that by this he judges that there are inhabitants. Being in doubt he returned to his ship; and he has been three months on the voyage; and this is certain. And on the way back he saw two islands, but was unwilling to land, in order not to lose time, as he was in want of provisions. The king here is much pleased at this; and he [Cabot] says that the tides are slack and do not run as they do here. The king has promised him for the spring ten armed ships as he [Cabot] desires and has given him all the prisoners to be sent away, that they may go with him, as he has requested; and has given him money that he may have a good time until then, and he is with his Venetian wife and his sons at Bristol. His name is Zuam Talbot and he is called the Great Admiral and vast honour is paid to him and he goes dressed in silk, and these English run after him like mad, and indeed he can enlist as many of them as he pleases, and a number of our rogues as well. The discoverer of these things planted on the land which he has found a large cross with a banner of England and one of St. Mark, as he is a Venetian, so that our flag has been hoisted very far afield.

Original Italian, with translation, printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 13–15.

First printed in 1837.

NO. 21. NEWS SENT FROM LONDON TO THE DUKE OF MILAN, 1497, AUG. 24

From the Archives of Milan.

[Aug. 24, 1497.] News received from England this morning by letters dated the 24th August[1]....Also some months ago his Majesty sent out a

[1] This despatch has been commonly attributed to Raimondo de Soncino, Milanese ambassador in England. He, however, could hardly have written it, since he had landed

Venetian, who is a very good mariner, and has good skill in discovering new islands, and he has returned safe, and has found two very large and fertile new islands. He has also discovered the Seven Cities, 400 leagues from England, on the western passage. This next spring his Majesty means to send him with fifteen or twenty ships.

Translated in *Calendar of State Papers, Milan*, vol. 1, ed. Allen B. Hinds, London, 1912, No. 535.

First printed in 1864.

NO. 22. RAIMONDO DE RAIMONDI DE SONCINO TO THE DUKE OF MILAN, 1497, DEC. 18

From the Archives of Milan.

[London, Dec. 18, 1497.] Perhaps amid the numerous occupations of your Excellency, it may not weary you to hear how his Majesty here has gained a part of Asia, without a stroke of the sword. There is in this Kingdom a man of the people, Messer Zoane Caboto by name, of kindly wit and a most expert mariner. Having observed that the sovereigns first of Portugal and then of Spain had occupied unknown islands, he decided to make a similar acquisition for his Majesty. After obtaining patents that the effective ownership of what he might find should be his, though reserving the rights of the Crown, he committed himself to fortune in a little ship, with eighteen persons. He started from Bristol, a port on the west of this kingdom, passed Ireland, which is still further west, and then bore towards the north, in order to sail to the east, leaving the north on his right hand after some days. After having wandered for some time he at length arrived at the mainland, where he hoisted the royal standard, and took possession for the king here; and after taking certain tokens he returned.

This Messer Zoane, as a foreigner and a poor man, would not have obtained credence, had it not been that his companions, who are practically all English and from Bristol, testified that he spoke the truth. This Messer Zoane has the description of the world in a map, and also in a solid sphere, which he has made, and shows where he has been. In going towards the east he passed far beyond the country of the Tanais. They say that the land is excellent and temperate, and they believe that Brazil wood

in England only the day before. He disembarked at Dover on August 23 from Calais, where he had remained for a fortnight. He was still at Dover on the 24th. (*Cal. of State Papers, Milan*, 1, No. 536.)

and silk are native there. They assert that the sea there is swarming with fish, which can be taken not only with the net, but in baskets let down with a stone, so that it sinks in the water. I have heard this Messer Zoane state so much.

These same English, his companions, say that they could bring so many fish that this kingdom would have no further need of Iceland, from which place there comes a very great quantity of the fish called stockfish. But Messer Zoane has his mind set upon even greater things, because he proposes to keep along the coast from the place at which he touched, more and more towards the east, until he reaches an island which he calls Japan [Cipango in original], situated in the equinoctial region, where he believes that all the spices of the world have their origin, as well as the jewels. He says that on previous occasions he has been to Mecca, whither spices are borne by caravans from distant countries. When he asked those who brought them what was the place of origin of these spices, they answered that they did not know, but that other caravans came with this merchandise to their homes from distant countries, and these again said that the goods had been brought to them from other remote regions. He therefore reasons that if the easterners declare to the southerners that these things come from places far away from them, and so on from one to the other, always assuming that the earth is round, it follows as a matter of course that the last of all must take them in the north towards the west [al septentrione verso lo occidente].

He tells all this in such a way, and makes everything so plain, that I also feel compelled to believe him. What is much more, his Majesty, who is wise and not prodigal, also gives him some credence, because he is giving him a fairly good provision, since his return, so Messer Zoane himself tells me. Before very long they say that his Majesty will equip some ships, and in addition he will give them all the malefactors, and they will go to that country and form a colony. By means of this they hope to make London a more important mart for spices than Alexandria. The leading men in this enterprise are from Bristol, and great seamen, and now they know where to go, say that the voyage will not take more than a fortnight, if they have good fortune after leaving Ireland.

I have also spoken with a Burgundian, one of Messer Zoane's companions, who corroborates everything. He wants to go back, because the Admiral, which is the name they give to Messer Zoane, has given him an island. He has given another to his barber, a Genoese by birth, and both consider themselves counts, while my lord the Admiral esteems himself at least a prince.

I also believe that some poor Italian friars will go on this voyage, who have the promise of bishoprics. As I have made friends with the Admiral, I might have an archbishopric if I chose to go there, but I have reflected that the benefices which your Excellency reserves for me are safer, and I therefore beg that possession may be given me of those which fall vacant in my absence, and the necessary steps taken so that they may not be taken away from me by others, who have the advantage of being on the spot. Meanwhile I stay on in this country, eating ten or twelve courses at each meal, and spending three hours at table twice every day, for the love of your Excellency, to whom I humbly commend myself.

London, the 18th. of December, 1497.

English translation, and important parts of the original Italian, printed in *Calendar of State Papers, Milan*, vol. 1, edited by Allen B. Hinds, London, 1912, No. 552.

First printed in 1865.

NO. 23. PAYMENTS TO EXPLORERS BY HENRY VII, 1497–8

From British Museum, Add. MSS. 7099. (A transcript made over a century ago by Craven Ord from a Household Book of Henry VII which cannot now be traced. Ord substituted Arabic for Roman numerals, but there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy or completeness of his copy.)

		£	s.	d.
f. 41.	12 Hen. VII, Aug. 10 [1497] To hym that founde the new Isle[1]	10	0	0
f. 44.	13 Hen. VII, Jan. 1st [1498] To a Venysian in reward	0	66	8
f. 45.	13 Hen. VII, March 22 [1498] To Lanslot Thirkill of London apon a prest for his Shipp going towards the new Ilande[2] . . .	20	0	0
Ib.	[same date] Delivered to Launcelot Thirkill going towards the new Ile in Prest . . .	20	0	0

[1] The twelfth year of Henry VII ended on Aug. 21, 1497. To this entry on the New Isle, Craven Ord adds the note: "Newfoundland, I suppose, it had been discovered about three years before". Search of the entries in this MS. for 1494 reveals no trace of a discovery in that year.

[2] This appears again on f. 129, where some of the entries are repeated in a different hand. To it the copyist adds: "Newfoundland, I suppose, it had been discovered about four years before".

		£	s.	d.
Ib. 13. Hen. VII,	Apr. 1st [1498] To Thomas Bradley and Launcelot Thirkill going to the new Isle	30	0	0
f. 45 b [same date]	To John Carter going to the New Isle, in reward	0	40	0

First printed in 1831. Here corrected from Ord's MS.

NO. 24. GRANT OF PENSION TO JOHN CABOT, 1497, DEC. 13

From the Public Record Office, Privy Seals, 13 Hen. VII, December.

Henry, by the grace of God King of England and of ffraunce and lord of Irland, To the most reverend fadre in God John, Cardinal archiebissop of Cantrebury, prymate of all England, and of the apostolique see legate, our chaunceller, greeting: We late you wite that We for certaine considerations us specially moevying have yeven and graunted unto our welbiloved John Calbot of the parties of Venice an annuitie or annuel rent of twenty poundes sterling, to be had and yerely perceyved from the fest of thanunciation of our lady last passed, during our pleasur, of our custumes and subsidies commyng and growing in our Poort of Bristowe, by thands of our custumers ther for the tyme beying, at Michelmas and Estre by even porcions; Wherefor we wol and charge you that under our grete seal ye do make heruppon our letters patentes in good and effectual forme. Yeven undre our Pryve Seal at our paloys of Westminister the xiiith day of Decembre, The xiiith yere of our Reigne. [With memorandum in Latin that this was duly done on January 28 following.]

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, p. 16.
First printed in 1884.

NO. 25. WARRANT FOR PAYMENT OF JOHN CABOT'S PENSION, 1498, FEB. 22

From the Public Record Office, Warrants for Issue, 13 Hen. VII, E. 404, Bundle 82.

Henry by the grace of God King of England and of ffraunce and lord of Irland To the Tresourer and Chambrelains of oure Eschequier greting: Where as We by oure warrant under oure signet for certain consideracions have yeven and graunted unto John Caboote xx li. [£20] yerely during oure pleasur to be had and perceyved by the handes of oure

Custumers in oure poorte of Bristowe, and as we be enfourmed the said John Caboote is dilaied of his payement bicause the said Custumers have no sufficient matier of discharge for their indempnitie to be yolden at their accomptes before the Barons of oure Eschequier; Wherfore we wol and charge you that ye oure said Treasourer and Chambrelains that now be and hereafter shallbe, that ye, unto suche tyme as ye shall have from us otherwise in commaundement, do to be levied in due fourme ij severall tailles, every of theim conteignying x li. upon the Customers of the revenues in our said poort of Bristowe at two usuell termes of the yere, whereof oon taill to be levied at this tyme conteignying x li. of the Revenues of oure said poort upon Richard Meryk and Arthure Kemys, late Custumers of the same, And the same taill or tailles in due and sufficient fourme levied ye delyver unto the said John Caboote to be had of oure gift by way of rewarde without prest or eny other charge to be sette upon hym or any of theim for the same. And thies our letters shalbe youre sufficient warrant in that behalf. Yeven undre oure prive seal at oure manour of Chene the xxiith day of ffebruary The xiiith yere of oure Reigne.

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 24–5.
First printed in 1896.

NO. 26. PAYMENT OF CABOT'S PENSION BY THE BRISTOL CUSTOMERS, 1498, MARCH 25

From the Public Record Office, Exchequer 122, 20/11 (View of Account, Bristol Customs, Michaelmas–Easter, 13 Hen. VII).

[Among other items.] And £10 paid by them to John Calbot a Venetian, late of the town of Bristol aforesaid, for his annuity of £20 a year granted to him by our said lord the king by his letters patent, to be taken at two terms of the year out of the customs and subsidies arising and growing in the said port of the town of Bristol, to wit, for the term of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary [Mar. 25, 1497][1] falling within the time of this view, by a quittance of the said John, shown upon this view and remaining in the possession of the said collectors.

Original Latin, with translation, printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 25–7.
First printed in 1897.

[1] The view was from Michaelmas, 1497, to Easter, 1498, but the payment due at Michaelmas was that arising from the Annunciation of 1497. [Note by present editor.]

NO. 27. PAYMENT OF CABOT'S PENSION BY THE BRISTOL CUSTOMERS, 1498–9

From the Westminster Chapter Archives, Chapter Muniments, 12243 (Roll of Accounts of the Bristol Customers for the years 1496–9).

[Among other items.] [Michaelmas, 1497–Michaelmas, 1498] And in the treasury in one tally in the name of John Cabot, £20. [Michaelmas, 1498–Michaelmas, 1499] And in the treasury in one tally in the name of John Cabot, £20.

Original Latin document reproduced in facsimile in *The Cabot Roll*, by E. Scott and A. E. Hudd, Bristol, 1897.

First known in 1897.

NO. 28. THE SECOND LETTERS PATENT GRANTED TO JOHN CABOT, 1498, FEB. 3

From the Public Record Office, Warrants for Privy Seal, C. 82/173, 13 Hen. VII, February.

To the kinge

Pleas it your highnesse, of your moste noble and habundaunt grace, to graunte to John Kabotto, Venician, your gracious letters patentes in due fourme to be made accordyng to the tenour hereafter ensuyng, and he shal contynually praye to God for the preservacion of your moste noble and roiall astate longe to endure.

H[en]R[icus] Rex.

To all men to whom thies presentis shall come, send gretyng: Knowe ye that we of our grace especiall and for dyvers causis us movyng we have geven and graunten and by thies presentes geve and graunte to our wel beloved John Kaboto, Venician, sufficiente auctorite and power that he by hym, his deputie or deputies sufficient may take at his pleasure vi englisshe shippes in any porte or portes or other place within this our realme of Englond or obeisaunce, so that and if the said shippes be of the bourdeyn of cc tonnes or under, with their apparaill requisite and necessarie for the saveconduct of the seid shippes, and theym convey and lede to the londe and Iles of late founde by the seid John in oure name and by our commaundemente, paying for theym and every of theym as and if we shuld in or for our owen cause paye and noon otherwise.

And that the seid John by hym, his deputie or deputies sufficiente maye take and receyve into the seid shippes and every of theym all suche Maisters, Maryners, pages and our subiectes, as of their owen free wille

woll goo and passe with hym in the same shippes to the seid londe or Iles withoute any impedymente, lett or perturbaunce of any of our officers or ministres or subiectes whatsoevir they be by theym to the seid John, his deputie or deputies and all other our seid subiectes or any of theym passing with the seid John in the seid shippes to the seid londe or Iles to be doon or suffer to be doon or attempted. Yeving in commaundement to all and every our officers, ministres and subiectes seying or heryng thies our letters patentes, without any ferther commaundement by us to theym or any of theym to be geven, to perfourme and socour the seid John, his deputie and all our seid subiectes so passyng with hym according to the tenour of thies our letters patentes, any statute, acte or ordenaunce to the contrarye made or to be made in any wise notwithstanding.[1]

[A Latin copy is in P.R.O., Treaty Roll 179, membr. 1.]

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 22–4.
First printed in 1831, but cited by Hakluyt, 1589.

NO. 29. AN ANONYMOUS LONDON CHRONICLE ON THE VOYAGE OF 1498

From *Cronicon regum Anglie* etc. in British Museum, Cotton MSS., Vitellius, A xvi, f. 173.

This yere the kyng at the besy request and supplicacion of a Straunger venisian, which by a Caart made hym self expert in knowyng of the world, caused the kyng to manne a ship with vytaill & other necessaries for to seche an Iland wheryn the said straunger surmysed to be grete comodities. With which ship by the kynges grace so rygged went iij or iiij moo owte of Bristowe, the said straunger beyng Conditor of the said fflete. Wheryn dyvers merchauntes aswell of london as Bristow aventured goodes & sleight merchaundises, which departed from the west cuntrey in the begynnyng of somer, but to this present moneth came nevir knowlege of their exployt.[2]

[1] A memorandum prefixed to the document shows it to have been passed on Feb. 3, 1498.

[2] The year referred to is the civic year from Sept. 15, 1497 to Sept. 14, 1498 and the "beginning of summer" must be that of 1498. "This present month" is presumably September, 1498. See C. L. Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, London, 1905, pp. 327–30. Compare this extract with those ascribed to Robert Fabyan by Hakluyt and Stow (Nos. 30 and 31). It is probable that this anonymous Chronicle and the lost Fabyan drew their information from some common source now untraceable. The anonymous Chronicle extends to 1509 and was written at or after that date.

NO. 30. THE CHRONICLE OF ROBERT FABYAN, AS RENDERED BY RICHARD HAKLUYT

From Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages*, London, 1582, reprinted by the Hakluyt Society (ed. J. W. Jones), 1850, pp. 23–4.

A Note of Sebastian Gabotes[1] Voyage of Discoverie, taken out of an old Chronicle, written by Robert Fabian, sometime Alderman of London, which is in the custodie of John Stowe, Citizen, a diligent searcher and preserver of Antiquities.

In the 13 yere of King Henrie the VII. 1498.

This yeere the King (by means of a Venetian, whiche made himselfe very expert and cunning in knowledge of the circuite of the worlde and Ilandes of the same as by a Carde and other demonstrations reasonable hee shewed), caused to man and victuall a shippe at Bristowe, to search for an Ilande, which hee saide hee knewe well was riche and replenished with riche commodities. Which Ship, thus manned and victualed at the kinges cost, divers merchants of London ventured in her small stockes, being in her as chiefe Patrone the saide Venetian. And in the companie of the saide shippe sayled also out of Bristowe three or foure small ships fraught with sleight and grosse merchandizes, as course cloth, Caps, Laces, points, and other trifles, and so departed from Bristowe in the beginning of May: of whom in this Maiors time returned no tidings.

Note.

Bristow.

William Purchas, Maior of London.

Of three savage men which hee[2] brought home and presented unto the king in the xvii yeere of his raigne.

Three savage men brought into England.

This yeere also were brought unto the king three men, taken in the new founde Iland, that before I spake of in William Purchas time, being Maior. These were clothed in beastes skinnes, and ate rawe fleshe, and spake such speech that no man coulde understand them, and in their demeanour like to bruite beastes, whom the king kept a time after. Of the which upon two yeeres past after I saw two apparelled after the manner of Englishmen, in Westminster pallace, which at that time I coulde not discerne from Englishmen, till I was learned what they were. But as for speech, I heard none of them utter one worde.[3]

[1] Note that the heading is from the pen of Hakluyt, who assumes that the navigator was Sebastian Cabot. Fabyan himself speaks only of "a Venetian", and his account evidently describes the second voyage of John Cabot in 1498. The marginal notes are also by Hakluyt.

[2] Again the heading is Hakluyt's, and so is the quite gratuitous assumption that the savages were brought home by the navigator of 1498.

[3] In 1600 Hakluyt reprinted the above passage in the third volume of his *Principal Navigations*, with the words "by meanes of a Venetian" altered to "by meanes of one

NO. 31. THE CHRONICLE OF ROBERT FABYAN, AS RENDERED BY JOHN STOW

From Stow's *Chronicle*, London, 1580, p. 875.

Stow gives the extracts from the Fabyan Chronicle, then in his possession, but now lost, which have already been quoted from Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages* (No. 30), but with the following variations:

Instead of Hakluyt's: This yeere the King (by meanes of a Venetian, whiche made himselfe very expert and cunning in knowledge of the circuite of the worlde and Ilandes of the same as by a Carde and other demonstrations reasonable hee showed), caused to man and victuall a shippe at Bristow....

Stow reads: This yeere one Sebastian Gabato, a Genoa's sonne, borne in Bristow, professing himself to be experte in knowledge of the circuite of the worlde and Ilandes of the same, as by his charts and other reasonable demonstrations he shewed, caused the King to man and victual a shippe at Bristow....

Instead of Hakluyt's: This yeere also were brought unto the king three men, taken in the new founde Iland, that before I spake of in William Purchas time, being Maior....

Stow reads: 1502, ann. reg. 18. This yeere were brought unto the king three men taken in the new found Ilands, by Sebastian Gabato, before named, in anno 1498.[1]...

NO. 32. AGOSTINO DE SPINULA TO THE DUKE OF MILAN, 1498, JUNE 20

From the Archives of Milan.

[London, June 20, 1498.] ...There were three other letters, one for Messer Piero Carmeliano, one for Messer Piero Penech, and one for Messer Giovanni Antonio de Carbonariis. I will keep the last until his

John Cabot a Venetian". It is evident that Hakluyt supplied the name from independent information, and did not find it in the Fabyan Chronicle. Cf. Stow's version (No. 31), and the anonymous Chronicle (No. 29).

[1] There are other verbal variations which are immaterial. I have printed Hakluyt's version first, although it is later in date, because it appears to be closer to the lost original. There can be no doubt that that document did not contain the name of Sebastian Cabot, which was supplied by Stow. Hakluyt admits as much by placing the name in the introductory heading avowedly written by himself. Compare the anonymous Chronicle (No. 29).

return. He left recently with five ships, which his Majesty sent to discover new islands.

Translated and first printed in *Calendar of State Papers, Milan*, vol. 1, ed. Allen B. Hinds, London, 1912.

NO. 33. PEDRO DE AYALA TO THE SPANISH SOVEREIGNS, 1498, JULY 25

From the Spanish Archives at Simancas.

[London, July 25, 1498.] I think Your Highnesses have already heard how the king of England has equipped a fleet to explore certain islands or mainland which he has been assured certain persons who set out last year from Bristol in search of the same have discovered. I have seen the map made by the discoverer, who is another Genoese like Columbus, who has been in Seville and at Lisbon seeking to obtain persons to aid him in this discovery. For the last seven years the people of Bristol have equipped two, three [and] four caravels to go in search of the island of Brazil and the Seven Cities according to the fancy of this Genoese. The king made up his mind to send thither, because last year sure proof was brought him they had found land. The fleet he prepared, which consisted of five vessels, was provisioned for a year. News has come that one of these, in which sailed another Friar Buil, has made land in Ireland in a great storm with the ship badly damaged. The Genoese kept on his way. Having seen the course they are steering and the length of the voyage, I find that what they have discovered or are in search of is possessed by Your Highnesses because it is at the cape which fell to Your Highnesses by the convention with Portugal. It is hoped they will be back by September. I let (? will let) Your Highnesses know about it. The king has spoken to me several times on the subject. He hopes the affair may turn out profitable. I believe the distance is not 400 leagues. I told him that I believed the islands were those found by Your Highnesses, and although I gave him the main reason, he would not have it. Since I believe Your Highnesses will already have notice of all this and also of the chart or mappemonde which this man has made, I do not send it now, although it is here, and so far as I can see exceedingly false, in order to make believe that these are not part of the said islands.

London, 25 July, 1498.

Original Spanish with translation printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 27–9.

First printed in 1862.

NO. 34. PIETRO PASQUALIGO, VENETIAN AMBASSADOR IN PORTUGAL, TO HIS BROTHERS IN VENICE, 1501, OCT. 19

From *Paesi nouamente retrouati*, Vicenza, 1507, lib. vi, cap. cxxvi.

[Lisbon, Oct. 19, 1501.] On the eighth of the present month arrived here one of the two caravels which this most august monarch sent out in the year past under Captain Gaspar Corterat to discover land towards the north; and they report that they have found land two thousand miles from here, between the north and the west, which never before was known to anyone. They examined the coast of the same for perhaps six hundred to seven hundred miles and never found the end, which leads them to think it a mainland. This continues to another land which was discovered last year in the north. The caravels were not able to arrive there on account of the sea being frozen and the great quantity of snow. They are led to this same opinion from the considerable number of very large rivers which they found there, for certainly no island could ever have so many nor such large ones. They say that this country is very populous and the houses of the inhabitants of long strips of wood covered over with the skins of fish. They have brought back here seven natives, men and women and children, and in the other caravel, which is expected from hour to hour, are coming fifty others. These resemble gypsies in colour, features, stature and aspect; are clothed in the skins of various animals, but chiefly of otters. In summer they turn the hair outside and in winter the opposite way. And these skins are not sewn together in any way nor tanned, but just as they are taken from the animals; they wear them over their shoulders and arms. And their privy parts are fastened with cords made of very strong sinews of fish, so that they look like wild men. They are very shy and gentle, but well formed in arms and legs and shoulders beyond description. They have their faces marked like those of the Indians, some with six, some with eight, some with less marks. They speak, but are not understood by anyone, though I believe that they have been spoken to in every possible language. In their land there is no iron, but they make knives out of stones and in like manner the points of their arrows. And yet these men have brought from there a piece of a broken gilt sword, which certainly seems to have been made in Italy. One of the boys was wearing in his ears two silver rings which without doubt seem to have been made in Venice, which makes me think it to be mainland, because it is not likely that ships would have gone there without their having been heard

of.[1] They have great quantity of salmon, herring, cod and similar fish. They have also great store of wood and above all of pines for making masts and yards of ships. On this account his Majesty here intends to draw great advantage from the said land, as well by the wood for ships, of which they are in want, as by the men, who will be excellent for labour and the best slaves that have hitherto been obtained. This has seemed to me worthy to be notified to you, and if anything more is learned by the arrival of the captain's caravel, I shall likewise let you know.

From a translation kindly lent by Dr H. P. Biggar.

NO. 35. ALONSO DE SANTA CRUZ ON THE NORTH-WESTERN DISCOVERIES

From the *Islario General de todas las Islas del Mundo,* by Alonso de Santa Cruz, a MS completed in 1541.

The Land of the Labrador.

That region of which we now wish to treat is commonly called the land of the Labrador, opinions differing whether it is cut off from the continent of Engrovelandia, of which we made mention in the first part [of this MS.], or whether it is all one land with the northern continent of Europe, which still awaits navigation, by reason of the harshness of that region, which is so cold that it can only be attempted in summer. Ziegler holds that this land is all continuous with Escondia, being influenced by what Antonio Gaboto[2] said of it, who had coasted the land and northern shore even farther than the land of the Bacallaos and almost as far as Florida, that even in July there were such great floes and masses of ice on the sea, larger than their ships, which came along the coast propelled by the currents, that they could hardly keep clear of them; but that story was very confused, and one in which little trust was placed, as being the first [of its

[1] Pietro Pasqualigo had evidently not heard of the Cabot expeditions, and his inference is that this was the mainland of Asia, to which the articles must have travelled otherwise than by sea, i.e. eastwards from Europe across the continent.

[2] Antonio Gaboto here really stands for Sebastian Cabot, the explanation being that Jacobus Ziegler (Strasburg, 1532) paraphrased Peter Martyr's account of Sebastian's north-western voyage, and gave the commander's name as "Antoninus Cabotus". Santa Cruz copies the name, but evidently does not realize that he is dealing with Sebastian Cabot, for at a later stage he describes "Antonio" Cabot as the father of Sebastian.

kind]. Olaus Magnus states that this land is cut off, so that according to him one could pass by it and round Escondia to go to the eastern islands, that is to say, on the eastern side of the same [i.e. of the land of Labrador]. As for the western side towards the land of the Bacallaos, it is said that two Portuguese brothers, named the Corte Reals, who went there to colonize by licence of the King of Portugal, and after whom it is also called the land of the Corte Reals, or Corteratos by the corruption of a syllable, asserted that the great main land of the West Indies, of which they occupied the extreme end, was separated from that island of the Labrador by a very large and wide sea channel, of which the pilot Antonio Gaboto, above named, also had information. It was called the land of the Labrador because a labrador [landholder] of the islands of the Azores gave notice and information about it to the King of England, when he sent in search of it Antonio Gaboto,[1] the English pilot and father of Sebastian Gaboto who now is Your Majesty's pilot-major. And since that time the land is frequented by the English who go there for fish, which the people of that land take in large quantities, which people they say are similar in their customs to those of Polonia, a province of Escondia, of which we spoke at the beginning of the first part. They obtain in the same way the furs of animals of great price and worth and carry thither merchandise which suits those people. It is said that the land is well peopled, with many trees and fine waters, and rivers of great volume, and with very small and very pleasant islands adjoining it along the whole coast, and with a well-stocked fishery. In the summer it has a pleasant aspect by reason of the many trees they say are there, an aspect which it does not retain in the winter on account of the heavy snowfall. The southern coast of this land, which is the part that has been hitherto explored, is a hundred and fifty leagues long, east and west, from the most easterly cape, called Cabo Gruesso, to another called Cabo de las Islas. Many fine rivers spring from it, and along the coast are many islands, although uninhabited and of no value. In the western part there is a great bay with many islands. It is in the latitude of fifty-six degrees and in the eleventh climate. Its longest day is of seventeen hours and a quarter.

Island of St. John: Islands of the Virgins.

Adjoining the coast of the land which we have above named the Bachallaos, where the Corte Reales, the two Portuguese brothers, went to colonize,

[1] Antonio Gaboto is here evidently John Cabot; but Santa Cruz, misled by Ziegler, is attributing to him Sebastian Cabot's voyage. It is plain that Santa Cruz had no knowledge of any other Cabot voyage than that described by Ziegler.

and which was first discovered by the pilot Antonio Gaboto, the Englishman, by command of the King of England, there are many islands, large and small, of all of which, to the present day, there is little knowledge because the land is very cold and of little value, and the two brothers aforesaid died there with all their men, although it is not known how, for nothing was ever heard of them from a short while after they reached that place; for which reason, and because of the small value of the land, the King of Portugal has not sought to send thither any more men or ships; but it is held to be a much better land than that of the Labrador, because it is warmer. [Continues with a confused account of a number of islands in the Newfoundland region, but without any more allusions to English discoveries.]

Original Spanish printed from a MS. at Vienna in *Die Karten von Amerika in dem Islario General des Alonso de Santa Cruz*, by Franz von Wieser, Innsbruck, 1908, pp. 1–4. Dr H. P. Biggar prints a text and translation from another MS. at Madrid in his *Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 183–94, but the present translation follows the Vienna MS., as being preferable in one important particular.

NO. 36. EXTRACTS FROM THE PATENT GRANTED BY THE SPANISH SOVEREIGNS TO ALONSO DE HOJEDA, 1501, JUNE 8

From the Spanish Archives at Simancas.

[Licence to Hojeda to pursue his discoveries on terms including the following:]

Firstly, that you may not touch in the land of the pearl-gathering, of that part of Paria from the coast of the Frailes and the gulf this side of Margarita, and on the other side as far as Farallon, and all that land which is called Citriana, in which you have no right to touch.

Item: that you go and follow that coast which you have discovered, which runs east and west, as it appears, because it goes towards the region where it has been learned that the English were making discoveries; and that you go setting up marks with the arms of their Majesties, or with other signs that may be known, such as shall seem good to you, in order that it be known that you have discovered that land, so that you may stop the exploration of the English in that direction.

Item: that you the said Alonso de Hojeda, for the service of their Majesties, enter that island and the others that are around it which are

called Quiquevacoa[1] in the region of the main land, where the green stones are, of which you have brought a sample, and that you obtain as many as you can, and in like manner see to the other things which you brought as specimens in that voyage.

Item: that you the said Alonso de Hojeda take steps to find out that which you have said you have learned of another gathering-place of pearls, provided that it be not within the limits above mentioned, and that in the same way you look for the gold-mines of whose existence you say you have news.

. . . . . .

And their Majesties, in consideration of what you have spent and the service you have done, and are now bound to do, make you the gift of the governorship of the island of Caquevacoa, which you have discovered, during their pleasure.... Likewise their Majesties make you gift in the island of Española of six leagues of land with its boundary, in the southern district which is called Maquana, that you may cultivate it and improve it, for what you shall discover on the coast of the main land for the stopping of the English, and the said six leagues of land shall be yours for ever.

Original Spanish printed in *Colección de los Viages y Descubrimientos*, by Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, Madrid, 1829, vol. III, pp. 85–8.

[1] Coquibaçoa.

IV. THE ANGLO-PORTUGUESE VOYAGES FROM BRISTOL

NO. 37. LETTERS PATENT TO JOÃO FERNANDEZ FROM THE KING OF PORTUGAL, 1499, OCT. 28

From the Archives in the Torre do Tumbo at Lisbon.

[Oct. 28, 1499.] King Emanuel, etc. To as many as shall see this grant, we make known that João Fernandez, dwelling in our island of Terceira, has informed us that for God's service and our own he was desirous to make an effort to seek out and discover at his own expense some islands lying in our sphere of influence, and we, in view of this his praiseworthy desire and intention, not only thank him for it, but it is our pleasure and we hereby promise to grant him, as indeed we shall grant him, the governorship of any island or islands, either inhabited or uninhabited, which he may newly discover and find; and this with the same revenues, honours, profits and advantages we have granted to the governors of our islands of Madeira and the others; and for his protection and as a memorandum to ourselves we order this grant, signed and sealed by us with our seal attached, to be given to him. Given in our city of Lisbon on October 28. Andre Fernandez made this in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1499.

Original Portuguese, with translation, in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 31–2.

First printed in 1883.

NO. 38. PETITION OF RICHARD WARDE, THOMAS ASSHEHURST, JOHN THOMAS, JOÃO FERNANDEZ, FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ AND JOÃO GONSALVEZ TO HENRY VII FOR LETTERS PATENT, 1501, MARCH 19

From the Public Record Office, Warrants for Privy Seals, Series II, No. 216.

[March 19, 1501.] Memorandum that on March 19, in the 16th year of King Henry VII, the following bill was considered by the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England at Westminster.

To the kyng our sovereyne Lord:

Please it your hignes of your most noble and haboundant grace to graunt unto your welbeloved subjectys Richard Warde, Thomas Asshehurst and John Thomas, merchauntys of your towne of Bristowe, and to John ffernandus, ffraunces ffernandus and John Gunsalus, Squyers borne in the Isle of Surrys [Azores] under the obeisaunce of the kyng of Portin-

gale, your gracious Letters patentis under your greate seale, in due forme to be made accordyng to the tenour hereafter ensuying, and that this byll, signyd with your gracious hand, may be to the Reverend ffader in God, Henry, bysshop of Salesbury, keper of your gret seale, sufficient and immediate warrant for the making, sealying, accomplysshyng of your seyd Letters patentes; and they shall duryng ther lyves pray to God for the prosperous contynuaunce of your most noble and ryall astate.

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, p. 40.
First printed in 1831.

NO. 39. LETTERS PATENT GRANTED TO RICHARD WARDE, THOMAS ASSHEHURST, JOHN THOMAS, JOÃO FERNANDEZ, FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ AND JOÃO GONSALVEZ, 1501, MARCH 19

From the Public Record Office, Patent Roll 16 Hen. VII, pt. 1, membr. 20, 21; another copy, Warrants for Privy Seals, Series II, No. 216.

Pro concessione Ricardo Warde et aliis.

The King to all and singular to whom our present letters patent shall come, Greeting: Be it known to you and made manifest that we, for certain considerations us moving, by the advice of our Council, have granted and given licence, as by these presents we grant and give licence for us and our heirs, as far as in us lies, to our well-beloved subjects Richard Warde, Thomas Asshehurst and John Thomas, merchants of our town of Bristol, and to our well-beloved John Fernandez, Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales, Esquires, of the Islands of the Azores in the dominions of the King of Portugal, and to any one of them, and to the heirs, attorneys, factors or deputies of any one of them, and to them and any one of them we grant full and unrestricted authority, faculty and power to sail and transport themselves to all parts, regions and territories of the eastern, western, southern, arctic and northern seas, under our banners and ensigns, with so many and so large and such ships or vessels as may be agreeable to them and may be necessary, of whatsoever burthen any ship or vessel may be, with masters, mates, mariners, pages and other men competent, requisite and necessary for the piloting, safeguard and defence of the aforesaid ships and vessels, at the cost and charges of the said Richard and of the others aforesaid, and at such salaries, wages and pay as they may agree upon among themselves, to find, recover, discover and search out whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatever part of the world they may lie, which before this

time were and at present are unknown to all Christians, and to set up our banners and ensigns in any town, city, castle, island or mainland by them thus newly found, and to enter and seize these same towns, and as our vassals and governors, lieutenants and deputies to occupy, possess and subdue these, the property, title, dignity and suzerainty of the same being always reserved to us. And furthermore whenever henceforth such islands, countries, lands and provinces shall be acquired, recovered and found by the aforesaid Richard and the others before-named, then we will and by these presents grant, that all and singular as well men and women of this our kingdom and the rest of our subjects, wishing and desiring to visit these lands and islands thus newly found, and to inhabit the same, shall be allowed and have power to go freely and in safety to the same countries, islands and places with their ships, men and servants, and all their goods and chattels, and to dwell in and inhabit the same under the protection and government of the said Richard and of the others aforesaid, and to acquire and keep the riches, fruits and profits of the lands, countries and places aforesaid; giving furthermore and granting to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas and John, John, Francis and John, and to any one of them, by the tenour of these presents full power and authority to rule and govern all and singular the men, sailors and other persons removing and making their way for the aforesaid purpose to the islands, countries, provinces, mainlands and places before-mentioned, as well in the company of the said Richard and of the others aforesaid, as in the company of people happening afterwards to betake themselves there, both on the sea as well as in these islands, countries, mainlands and places after they have been found and recovered, and to make, set up, ordain and appoint laws, ordinances, statutes and proclamations for the good and peaceful rule and government of the said men, masters, sailors and other persons aforesaid, and also to issue proclamations to chastise and punish according to the laws and statutes set up by them in that region all and singular those whom they may find there hostile and rebellious and disobedient to the laws, statutes and ordinances aforesaid, and all who shall commit and perpetrate theft, homicide or robberies or who shall rape and violate against their will or otherwise any women of the islands or countries aforesaid. And furthermore we have granted to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John, their heirs and assigns, that when any islands, countries, mainlands, region or province shall henceforth be discovered by the same Richard and the others aforesaid, then it shall not be lawful for any subject or subjects of ours, during the term of ten years next and immediately following, to visit with their ships or to make their

way to the same towns, countries, islands, mainlands and places, for the purpose of trading and obtaining goods, without the licence and permission of the said Richard and of the others aforesaid, their heirs and assigns, or to enter the same, or to send into the same to obtain any goods; and that after the term of the said ten years, none of our subjects shall presume to sail to or visit any mainland, island, country or place thus newly found by the said Richard and Thomas and the others aforesaid without our licence and that of the said Richard and of the others aforesaid, on pain of the loss and forfeiture of all the goods, merchandise, commodities and vessels whatsoever daring to sail to these places thus newly discovered and to enter the same, namely, one-half of the same to be for our use, and the other half for the use of the said Richard and of the others aforesaid and of their heirs.

And furthermore of our abundant grace we have granted and by these presents grant for us and our heirs, as far as in us lies, to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John and any one of them, their heirs and assigns, that they and any one of them shall have power and permission to bring and transport and cause to be brought or transported merchandise and wares, gold and silver in bar, precious stones, and other goods whatsoever grown in the countries, islands and places aforesaid by them thus to be recovered and found, as well in the said ships and vessels as in other strange ships whatsoever, from the said countries, islands, mainlands and places into this our realm of England, to any port whatsoever or other place in the same, and to sell and distribute these for their own profit and advantage, any statute, act, ordinance, restriction or order made to the contrary notwithstanding.

And we, bearing in mind most especially the heavy costs and charges which are required for the performance and execution of the above, wishing therefore to do special favour in like manner to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas and the other persons mentioned, have granted and by these presents grant to the same, their heirs and assigns, that they and any one of them, their heirs and assigns aforesaid, may from time to time during the term of four years from the date of the recovery and discovery of the islands and countries aforesaid next and immediately following, land in the port or place aforesaid the merchandise and wares and other goods, loaded and carried on one vessel, of so great tonnage whatsoever she be, and which are to be brought and transported into this our realm of England, and may sell, expose and distribute these at their pleasure from time to time after any voyage during the term of the said four years, without in any way paying to us or to our heirs within our said realm of England,

any customs, subsidies or other dues on the same goods, merchandise and other things aforesaid contained and carried in the said one vessel only. Provided nevertheless that with regard to the customs, subsidies, poundages and other dues to be paid on the rest of the merchandise, wares and goods on board all the other vessels, true answers, as is right, be given to us, according to the practice hitherto prevailing in this our realm of England. And furthermore we will and grant by these presents that any chief master, mate and sailor of any ship whatsoever visiting and sailing to any mainland, island, country, province and place aforesaid, may have, enjoy and receive of the goods and wares to be brought from the said islands, mainlands and countries into this our realm of England, the following customs and subsidies, namely: that any master may have, enjoy and receive on any voyage the customs and subsidies of four tons, and any mate or quartermaster the customs and subsidies of two tons, and any sailor the customs and subsidies of one ton, even though they be loaded and carried as his own goods or as the goods of any other person whatsoever; and this without any customs, subsidies, dues or duties being in any way paid or asked for the same tonnage within this our realm of England for our needs or those of our heirs.

And should it happen that any merchant or merchants of this our realm arrive at the said islands, countries and places by licence of our said subjects or without their licence, for the purpose of obtaining merchandise and wares, and should carry on business and bring goods and wares from those parts into this our kingdom, then we will and grant by these presents to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John, their heirs and assigns, that they, during the aforesaid term of ten years, may receive from any such merchant, the customs, subsidies and other dues having been paid that it is customary to remit to us in such case, the twentieth part of all such goods and merchandise brought and transported by the same from the said islands, countries and places into this our realm of England on any voyage during the said term of ten years, this twentieth part to be had and taken in the port in which it shall happen that the said goods are unloaded and discharged. Provided always that during the said term of ten years the aforesaid Richard and the others aforesaid, their heirs and assigns, and not any other persons, be the factors and attorneys in the said islands, mainlands and countries in behalf of any such merchants and other persons repairing there for the aforesaid cause in and for the trade carried on there for them. Provided also that no vessel charged and loaded with goods and merchandise from the said regions thus newly found, after she has been brought into any port of this our

realm, be discharged of the said goods and merchandise except in the presence of the aforesaid Richard and of the others aforesaid, or of their heirs or deputies to be assigned for this purpose, on pain of the forfeiture of the said goods and merchandise, whereof one half shall be applied to our needs and the other half be given to the aforesaid Richard and to the others before-named and to their heirs. And if afterwards any strangers or other persons should presume against the wish of the said Richard and of the others before-named to sail to these said regions for the purpose of enriching themselves, and to enter the same by violence, and there to insult the said Richard and the others aforesaid or their heirs, and to conquer and expel them, or otherwise to disturb them, then we will and by the tenour of these presents give and grant power to the same subjects of ours, to expel and resist with all their force, as well by land as by sea and fresh water, these strangers, even though they be subjects and vassals of some prince in league and friendship with us, and to wage and carry on war against them, and to arrest, bind and place them in prison, there to remain until they shall have made fine and redemption to our said subjects; or otherwise to chastise and punish them according to the sober discretion of our said subjects and of their heirs.[1]

And also by the tenour of these presents we give and grant full power to our aforesaid subjects, and to the other persons aforesaid, to make, constitute, nominate and appoint under them by their letters patent to be sealed with their seals, any captains, lieutenants and deputies whatsoever in each of the states, cities, towns and places aforesaid for the administration and government of all and singular the persons in those parts, under the rule and authority of our said subjects there dwelling, and for the due execution and administration of justice in the same, according to the tenour and import of the ordinances, statutes and proclamations aforesaid. And furthermore we have granted and by these presents grant to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John for the term of their lives and of the life of any one of them, the office of Admiral at sea in any of the places, countries and provinces whatsoever by them thus newly discovered and henceforth to be found and recovered; and

[1] In the Privy Seals copy of this grant, although not in the final copy inscribed on the Patent Roll, there is at this point a very significant clause which has been struck through by a contemporary pen: "And that no foreigner or foreigners by virtue or colour of any concession by us to them under our Great Seal formerly made, or to be made in future, concerning any other places and islands shall drive them [Warde etc.] or any of them from their title and possessions over and in the said mainlands, islands and provinces in any way or manner against their will".

we make, constitute, ordain and appoint by these presents the said Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John and any one of them whomsoever, conjointly and separately, our Admirals in the same parts, giving and granting to them and to any one of them whomsoever, by the tenour of these presents, full power and authority to do, exercise and carry out all and singular the things which pertain to the office of Admiral, according to the law and the naval custom obtaining in this our realm of England.

And further after the aforesaid Richard Warde, Thomas Ashehurst and John Thomas and John Fernandez, Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales shall have thus found, acquired and subdued with our assistance, any mainlands, islands, countries and provinces, cities, castles, states and towns, then we will and by these presents grant to them, their heirs and assigns, that they and their heirs may have, hold and possess for themselves, their heirs and assigns all and singular, such and so great mainlands, islands, countries, provinces, castles, cities, fortresses, states, and towns as and as great as they and their agents, lieutenants and servants are able to inhabit, take possession of, hold and maintain; the same lands, islands and places aforesaid to be had and held by them, their heirs and assigns, and by any one of them whomsoever, of us and of our heirs in perpetuity by fidelity alone, without any composition or anything else being rendered or made to us or to our heirs for the same, always excepting the dignity, dominion, regality, jurisdiction and suzerainty of the same, wholly reserved to us. And furthermore we have granted to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John, that when the said mainlands, islands and countries thus made over to them and to their heirs aforesaid, as set forth above, have been discovered and recovered, and when they are in full possession of the same, they, their heirs and assigns may hold, possess and enjoy the same freely, quietly and peaceably, without any impediment of any sort from us or from any of our heirs whomsoever. And that none of our subjects shall in any way expel them or any one of them from and out of their possession and title to and in the said mainlands, islands and countries in any wise against their will. Promising in good faith and on the word of a king that we shall hold ratified, acceptable and stable all and whatsoever the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John, and any of them whosoever, by way of completing the premises, shall do or shall procure to be done herein. And that neither we nor our heirs ever nor at any time in the future shall disturb, hinder or molest them or any one of them or their heirs and assigns in their right, title and possession, nor shall we permit nor cause this to be done or

brought about, nor shall we cause it to be done by others our subjects, or others whomsoever, so far as in us lies; nor shall we in any way remove them, their heirs and assigns from the said mainlands, countries, provinces and places for any cause afterwards arising or happening, nor shall we cause them to be removed or expelled by our subjects.

And further of our greater special goodness and very own motion we have granted and by these presents grant for us and our heirs, as far as in us lies, to John Fernandez, Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales, Esquires, of the Islands of the Azores, born subjects of the king of Portugal, and to any one of them whomsoever, that they and any one of them and all their children, as well born as to be born, are for ever subjects and lieges of us and of our heirs, and in all lawsuits, quarrels, affairs and matters whatsoever are to be considered, treated, held, esteemed and governed as our true and faithful lieges born within our realm of England, and not otherwise nor in any other way. And that they and all their children aforesaid, and any one of them whomsoever, may carry on and bring real, personal and mixed actions in all courts, places and jurisdictions of ours whatsoever in all ways, and may use and benefit by these, and may sue and be sued in the same, answer and be answered to, defend them and be defended in all things and everywhere as our true and faithful lieges born within our realm aforesaid. And that they, and any one of them whosoever, may examine, take, receive, own, hold, possess and inherit for himself, his heirs and assigns, in perpetuity or in any other way whatsoever, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and other possessions whatsoever, as well in full ownership as in reversion, within our said realm of England and the other dominions and places under our obedience, and these give away, sell, alienate and bequeath to any person or persons whomsoever, as it may please them, freely, quietly, lawfully and safely, and any one of them may so do at his pleasure, as freely, fully and peaceably as any liege of ours born within our realm of England is able and has power to do. In such a way nevertheless that the aforesaid John and Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales, and all their children aforesaid, pay or cause to be paid, and each of them pays or causes to be paid, such customs, taxes and other dues for their goods, wares, merchandise and commodities which are to be brought into our realm of England or taken out of the same, as foreigners pay to us, or ought, or are accustomed to pay. And that the same John and Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales, and all their children aforesaid, from henceforward under colour or in virtue of any statute, ordinance or grant made or to be made in our parliament or out of our parliament, be not forced, held

nor compelled nor any one of them be forced, held or compelled to pay, give, render or bring to us or to any of our heirs, or to anyone else whomsoever, any taxes, tallages or other dues whatsoever for their lands, tenements, goods or persons, except such and so much as our other faithful lieges, born within our said realm pay, give, render or bring, or are accustomed and held to pay, give, render or bring generally for their goods, lands, tenements or persons; but that the aforesaid John and Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales, and all their children aforesaid, and any one of them, may and can have and possess all things and all other liberties, privileges, franchises and customs, and may use and enjoy them, and any one of them may so do within our said realm of England, our jurisdictions and dominions whatsoever, as freely, quietly, fully and peaceably as the rest of our lieges, born within our said realm generally hold, use and enjoy them, or ought and should hold, possess, use and enjoy them; any statute, act, ordinance, or any other cause, affair or matter whatsoever notwithstanding. Provided always that the aforesaid John and Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales, and each of them does liege homage to us, and that they and each one of them aids with lot and scot and with the other dues payable and customary everywhere in our aforesaid realm, as our lieges do who are born within our said kingdom. Provided also that the said John and Francis Fernandez and John Gonzales pay, and each of them pays to us and to our heirs so many and such customs, subsidies and other dues for their goods and merchandise as foreigners are held to pay and give to us.

And further of our greater goodness we have granted to the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John, that they may have our present letters in our Chancery without payment to us of any fine or fee or of any fines or fees for the same letters of ours, or for any part thereof, or for our Great Seal in any way at the Exchequer of our said Chancery. And we will and grant by these presents that the most Reverend father in God, Henry, bishop of Salisbury, the Custodian of our Great Seal, by the authority of this present grant of ours, shall cause to be prepared and sealed so many and such briefs sealed with our Great Seal and directed to the custodian or clerk of our Exchequer for the discharge of the said fines and fees, as and such as may be necessary and requisite for the same without any other warrant or attendance being made before us in this matter.

In witness whereof, etc.

Witness ourself at Westminster on the nineteenth day of March.

By the king himself, and at the date aforesaid, etc.

And the customs' officers, or the collectors of the king's customs and subsidies at the port of his town of Bristol, both present and future, are ordered, according to the tenour of the aforesaid letters, to allow the aforesaid Richard, Thomas, John, John, Francis and John, and any one of them whomsoever, their heirs and assigns to land at the aforesaid harbour whatsoever goods, merchandise and wares contained, loaded and carried in the said one vessel, of whatsoever burthen she be, which are brought and transported from the said islands, countries and places to be found and recovered by the same as aforesaid, to the said port of Bristol, from time to time on any voyage during the term of the said four years from the date of the recovery and discovery of the islands, countries and places aforesaid, without payment of any customs, subsidies or other dues to the said lord the king or to his heirs for the said goods, merchandise and wares, and to set out, sell and distribute these at their will, and not to molest nor oppress the said persons contrary to the tenour of the said letters.

Witness the king at Westminster on the nineteenth day of March.

And the aforesaid customs' officers, or the collectors in the aforesaid port, both present and future, are ordered according to the tenour of the aforesaid letters, to allow the aforesaid masters, mates or quartermasters and sailors of any ship whatsoever, sailing and making its way to any mainland, country or place aforesaid, and any one of them whomsoever, to have, enjoy and receive from time to time the customs and subsidies of the aforesaid tonnage in the form and manner stated above, without the payment by them or by any of them whomsoever in any way of any customs, subsidies and other dues to the said lord the king for the said tonnage in and on any voyage whatsoever, and they are not to molest nor oppress them or any one of them in any way contrary to the tenour of these said presents.

Witness the king at Westminster on the nineteenth day of March.

Original Latin, with translation, printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 41–59.

First printed in 1831.

NO. 40. GRANT OF BOUNTY TO ROBERT THORNE, WILLIAM THORNE AND HUGH ELYOT, 1502, JAN. 7

From the Public Record Office, Exchequer, Warrants for Issues, E. 404. 84.

[Jan. 7, 1502.] Henry by the grace of god king of England and of ffraunce and lord of Irland, To the Tresourer and Chambrelains of our

Eschequier greting. Where as Robert Thorne, hugh Elyot and William Thorne of oure Town of Bristowe merchauntes of late have bought at Depe in the parties of Normandy a ship called the verdure of Depe and now named by them the Gabriell of Bristowe, of the portage of six score tonnes or therabouts, and have doo the said ship to be conveied to Bourdeaux, and there have charged her with wynes, woad and other merchaundises to be conveied fromthens to oure said Town of Bristowe, and with the same ship the said merchauntes offre to doo unto us service at alle tymes at our commaundement, In consideracion wherof and towardes theire costes and charges in that partie we have yeven and graunted unto them the summe of twenty poundes to be taken and reteigned in theire owne handes of the custumes, subsidies and othre duties to us belonging of suche wynes, woad and other merchaundises as the said ship shall bring at her next arryvall from Bourdeaux into oure said poort of Bristowe. We wol therefore...you that at the receipt of oure said Eschequier ye doo levye and stake out in due and sufficient forme a taill conteigning... said summe of twenty poundes for the said Robert Thorne, hugh Elyot and William Thorne, to be levied upon the cust...collectde of our Custumes and subsidies in oure said poort of Bristowe of and upon the Custumes and subsidies of such...woad and othre goodes and merchaundises as is charged in the said ship, now at her furst arryvall in our said poort as is....And that taill soo in due forme levied ye delyver unto the said merchauntes for their sufficient discharge of the said summe...[1] prest or other charge to be sette upon them or eny of them for the same. And thies oure lettres shalbe youre sufficient warrant and discharge in that behalf. Yeven undre oure Previe Seale at our manour of Richemount the vijth day of January the xvijth yere of oure Reigne.

First noted in *Cabot's Discovery of North America*, by G. E. Weare, London, 1897. Here first printed in full.

NO. 41. PAYMENT TO THOMAS THORNE, 1502, MAY 4

From the Bristol Customs Records in the Public Record Office.

E. 122. 20/14. View of Account, 17 Hen. VII, Michaelmas–Easter [*1501–2*].

[Among various payments to be deducted.] xx^{li} by them paid by j tally levied at the aforesaid rate on the iiijth day of May in the xvijth year of the aforesaid King on behalf of Thomas Thorne and on seeing this duly shown.

Here first printed.

[1] Supply "without".

NO. 42. GRANT OF PENSIONS TO FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ AND JOÃO GONSALVEZ, 1502, SEPT. 26

From the Public Record Office, Warrants for Issues, E. 404, 84/1.

Henry, by the grace of God King of England and of ffraunce, and lord of Irland, To the Tresourer and Chambrelains of oure Eschequier, greting: Where as We by our letters undre oure prive seal bering date at oure manour of Langley the xxvith day of septembre, the xviiith yere of oure Reigne [1502], gaf and graunted unto oure trusty and welbeloved subgiettes, ffraunceys ffernandus and John Guidisalvus, squiers, in consideracion of the true service which they have doon unto us to oure singler pleasure as Capitaignes into the newe founde lande, unto eithre of them ten poundes yerely during oure pleasure to be had and perceyved of the Revenues of oure Custumes commyng and growing within oure poort of Bristowe, by the handes of the customers there that now be and hereafter shalbe, at the festes of Estre and Michaelmas, by even porcions, And forasmoche as Richard Meryk and Arthure Kemys, late Custumers in oure said poort of Bristowe, have paide unto the said ffraunceys ffernandus and John Guidisalvus twenty poundes for oon hool yere ended at the fest of Saint Michell tharchaungell last past [29 Sept., 1503], for the which they have no maner of discharge to be alleged at theire accomptes before the Barons of oure Eschequier, Wherfore we wol that ye in due and sufficient fourme doo to be levied for thesaid ffraunceys ffernandus and John Guidisalvus a taille or tailles conteignying the said summe of xx li. upon Richard Meryk and Arthure Kemys, late Custumers in oure said poort, of the revenues of thesame, And furthermore we wol that ye fromhensforth from tyme to tyme and yere to yere, doo to be levied severall tailles conteignyng thesaid summe of xx li. upon the Customers of oure said poort that nowe be and herafter shallbe, unto the tyme ye shall have from us otherwise in commaundement by writing, And thesaid taille or tailles in due and sufficient fourme levied upon thesaid Custumers at the festes beforesaid, we wol that ye delyvere unto thesaid ffraunceys ffernandus and John Guidisalvus, or unto the bringer herof in theire names, to be taken of oure gyfte by way of rewarde without preste or eny othre maner of charge to be set upon them or eny of them for thesame, And thies oure letters shalbe youre sufficient warrant in that behalf. Yeven undre oure prive Seal at oure Citie of London the vith day of Decembre, the xixth yere of oure Reigne [1503].

Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 91–2.
First printed in 1896.

NO. 43. LETTERS PATENT GRANTED TO HUGH ELYOT, THOMAS ASSHEHURST, JOÃO GONSALVEZ AND FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ, 1502, DEC. 9

From the Public Record Office, Patent Roll 18 Hen. VII, part 2, membr. 29–30.

Of Licence to discover unknown Land

The king to all singular to whom the present letters shall come, Greeting: Be it known to you and made manifest that we, for certain considerations us moving, by the advice of our Council, have granted and given licence, as by these presents we grant and give licence for us and our heirs, as far as in us lies, to our well-beloved subjects Hugh Elyot and Thomas Asshehurste, merchants of our town of Bristol, and to our well-beloved John Gonzales and Francis Fernandez, Esquires, of the islands of the Azores, born under the dominion of the king of Portugal, and to any one of them whomsoever, and to the heirs, attorneys, factors or deputies of any one of them, and to them and to any one of them whomsoever, we grant full and free authority, faculty and power to sail and transport themselves to all parts, regions and territories of the eastern, western, southern, arctic and northern seas, under our banners and ensigns, with so many and so large and such ships or vessels as may be agreeable to them and may be necessary, of whatsoever burthen any ship or vessel may be, with masters, mates, mariners, pages and other men competent, requisite and necessary for the piloting, safe-conduct and defence of the aforesaid ships and vessels, at the cost and charges of the said Hugh and of the others aforesaid, and at such salaries, wages and stipends as they may agree upon among themselves, to find, recover, discover and search out any islands, countries, regions or provinces whatsoever of heathens and infidels in whatsoever part of the world placed, and to set up our banners and ensigns in any city, town, castle, island or mainland by them thus newly found, and to enter and seize the said cities, towns, castles, islands and mainlands for us and in our name, and as our vassals and governors, lieutenants and deputies to occupy, possess, and subdue these, the property, title, dignity and suzerainty of the same being always reserved to us. Provided always that they in no wise occupy themselves with nor enter the lands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens or infidels first discovered by the subjects of our very dear brother and cousin the king of Portugal, or by the subjects of any other princes soever, our friends and confederates, and in possession of which these same princes now find themselves. And furthermore whenever henceforth these islands, countries,

lands and provinces shall be acquired, recovered and found by the aforesaid Hugh and the others named, then we will by these presents that all and singular, as well men as women, of this our realm, and the rest of our subjects wishing and desiring to visit these lands and islands thus newly found, and to inhabit the same, may and shall have power to go freely and in safety to the said countries, islands and places with their ships, men and servants and with all their goods and chattels, and to dwell in and inhabit the same under the protection and government of the said Hugh and of the others aforesaid, and to acquire and obtain the riches, fruits and profits of the lands, countries and places aforesaid.

Giving furthermore and granting to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis and to any one of them, by the tenour of these presents, full power and authority to rule and govern all and singular the men, sailors, and other persons removing and making their way to the islands, countries, provinces, mainlands and places aforesaid for the aforesaid purpose, as well in the company of the said Hugh and of the others aforesaid, as in the company of others happening afterwards to betake themselves there, both on sea as well as in each of these countries, mainlands and places, after they have been found and recovered; and to make, set up, ordain and appoint laws, ordinances, statutes and proclamations for the good and peaceful rule and government of the said men, masters, sailors and other persons aforesaid, and also to issue proclamations, and to chastise and punish according to the laws and statutes set up by them in that region all and singular those whom they may find there hostile and rebellious, and disobedient to the laws, statutes and ordinances aforesaid and all those who shall commit and perpetrate theft, homicide or robbery, or who shall rape and violate any women of the islands or countries aforesaid against their will or otherwise.

And also we have granted to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, their heirs and assigns, that when any islands, countries, mainlands, region or province shall be henceforth discovered by the said Hugh and others aforesaid, then it shall not be lawful for any subject or subjects of ours, during the term of forty years next and immediately following, to visit with their ships or to make their way to the said towns, countries, islands, mainlands and places for the purpose of trading and obtaining goods, without our royal licence and that of the said Hugh and of the others aforesaid, their heirs and assigns, or to enter the same, or to send to the same to obtain any goods. And after the term of the said forty years, that none of our subjects shall presume to sail to or visit any mainland, island, country or place thus newly found by the same Hugh and

Thomas and the others aforesaid, without our aforesaid licence and that of the said Hugh and of the others aforesaid, on pain of the loss and forfeiture of all the goods and merchandise, commodities and vessels whatsoever venturing to sail to these places thus newly discovered and to enter the same, namely: one half to be for us and the other half for the said Hugh and the others aforesaid and for their heirs.

And furthermore of our abundant grace we have granted and by these presents grant for us and our heirs, as far as in us lies, to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, and to any one of them whomsoever, their heirs and assigns, that they and any one of them may and can bring and transport and cause to be brought or transported merchandise, wares, gold and silver in bar, precious stones, and other goods whatsoever, being the produce of the countries, islands and places aforesaid by them thus to be recovered and found, as well in the said ships and vessels, as in other strange ships whatsoever, from the said countries, islands, mainlands and places into this our realm of England, to any port whatsoever or other place in the same, and these sell and distribute for their own profit and advantage, any statute, act, ordinance or provision made or passed thence to the contrary notwithstanding.

And we, bearing in mind most especially the heavy costs and charges which are necessary for the performance and execution of the above, wishing therefore to do special favour on that account to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas and to the other persons mentioned, have granted, as by these presents we grant, to the same, their heirs and assigns, that they and any one of them whosoever, their heirs and assigns aforesaid, may, from time to time during the period of five years from the date of the recovery and discovery of the islands and countries aforesaid next and immediately following, land in the port or place aforesaid merchandise, wares and other goods, loaded and freighted on one vessel alone, of so great tonnage whatsoever it be, which are to be brought and transported into this our realm of England, and these sell, expose and distribute at their pleasure from time to time on any voyage during the period of the said five years without in any way paying to us or to our heirs within our said realm of England, any customs, subsidies or other duties upon the same goods, merchandise and other things aforesaid contained and loaded in the said one vessel alone. Provided nevertheless that with regard to the customs, subsidies, poundages and other payments for the rest of the merchandise, wares and goods on board all the other vessels, true answers as is right be given to us in conformity with the practice hitherto observed in this our realm of England.

And furthermore we will and grant by these presents that any master, mate and sailor of any ship whatsoever visiting and sailing to any mainland, island, country, province and place aforesaid, may have, enjoy and receive of the goods and wares to be brought from the said islands, mainlands and countries into this our realm of England the following customs and subsidies, namely: any master may have, enjoy and receive in any voyage the customs and subsidies on four tons; and any mate or quartermaster the customs and subsidies on two tons; and any sailor the customs and subsidies on one ton, even though they be loaded and charged as his own goods, or as the goods of any other person whomsoever. And this without any subsidies, customs, dues or duties being in any way paid or asked for the same tonnage within this our realm of England for our needs or those of our heirs.

And should it happen that any merchant or merchants of this our realm should arrive at the said islands, countries and places under licence of our said subjects, or without their licence, for the purpose of obtaining merchandise or wares, and should make a business of bringing goods and wares from those parts into this our kingdom, then we will grant by these presents to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, and to their heirs and assigns, that they, during the aforesaid period of forty years, may receive from any such merchant, after payment to us of the usual customs, subsidies and other moneys due to us in such case, the twentieth part of all such goods and merchandise to be brought and taken by the same from the said islands, countries and places into this our realm of England on any voyage during the said period of forty years; this twentieth part to be obtained and taken in the port in which it shall happen that the said goods are unloaded and discharged. Provided always that the aforesaid Hugh and the others aforesaid, their heirs and assigns, and not any other persons whatsoever are henceforward the factors and attorneys in the said islands, mainlands and countries for any such merchants and other persons repairing there for the aforesaid cause during the said period of forty years in and for the trade carried on there by them. Provided also that no vessel loaded and freighted with goods and merchandise from the said regions thus newly found, after it has been brought into any port of this our kingdom, shall be discharged of these goods and merchandise except in the presence of the aforesaid Hugh and of the others aforesaid, or of their heirs or deputies assigned for this purpose on pain of the forfeiture of the said goods and merchandise, of which one half shall be for us and the other half to be given to the aforesaid Hugh and the others beforenamed and to their heirs.

And if in future any strangers or other persons should presume against the wish of the said Hugh and of the others beforenamed to sail to those parts for the purpose of enriching themselves, and to enter the same by violence, and there to insult the said Hugh and the others aforesaid or their heirs, and to expel and subdue them or otherwise to disturb them, then it is our wish and by the tenour of these presents we give and grant power to our said subjects to expel, resist and with all their force carry on and wage war, as well by land as by sea and on fresh water, against these strangers, even though they be subjects and vassals of any prince in league and friendship with us, and to arrest, bind and imprison them, there to remain until they shall have made fine and redemption to our said subjects, or otherwise to chastise and punish them according to the sober discretion of our said subjects and of their heirs.

And also by the tenour of these presents we give and grant full power to our aforesaid subjects and to the other persons aforesaid to make, constitute, nominate and appoint under them, by their letters patent to be sealed with their seals, any captains, lieutenants and deputies whomsoever in each of the states, cities, towns and places of the said islands, provinces, countries and places aforesaid, for the administration and government of all and singular the persons in those parts, under the rule and authority of our said subjects there dwelling, and for the due execution and administration of justice in the same, according to the tenour and effect of the ordinances, statutes and proclamations aforesaid.

And furthermore we have granted and by these presents grant to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, for the term of their lives and of the life of any one of them, the office of Admiral at sea in any of the places, countries and provinces whatsoever by them thus newly discovered, and henceforth to be found and recovered; and we make, constitute, ordain and appoint by these presents the said Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis and any one of them, conjointly and separately, our Admirals in the same parts, giving and granting them and any one of them by the tenour of these presents full power and authority to do, exercise and carry out all and singular the things which pertain to the office of Admiral, according to the law and naval custom practised in this our realm of England.

And further after the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis shall thus have found, acquired and subdued any mainlands, islands, countries and provinces, cities, castles, states and towns by our assistance, then it is our wish and by these presents we give power to them, their heirs and assigns, to have hold and possess for themselves, their heirs and assigns,

all and singular such and so great mainlands, islands, countries, provinces, castles, cities, fortresses, states and towns, as and as great as they and their agents, lieutenants and servants are able to inhabit, take possession of, hold and maintain; the said lands, islands and places aforesaid to be had and held by them, their heirs and assigns, and by any one of them, of us and of our heirs in perpetuity by fidelity alone, without any fee or anything else being rendered or made to us or to our heirs for the same, always excepting the dignity, dominion, regality, jurisdiction and suzerainty of the same, wholly reserved to us.

And furthermore we have granted to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis that they, their heirs and assigns aforesaid, may enjoy, hold and possess the said mainlands, islands and countries thus conceded to them and to their heirs aforesaid as set forth above, after these have been discovered and recovered and when they are in full possession of the same, freely, quietly, peaceably, without any impediment of any sort from us or our heirs whomsoever. And that none of our subjects shall in any way expel them or any one of them from and out of their possession and title to and in the said mainlands, islands and countries in any way whatsoever against their will; promising in good faith and on the word of a king that we shall hold ratified, acceptable and stable all and whatsoever the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, and any one of them whosoever, by way of completing the premises, shall do or shall procure to be done herein. And that neither we nor our heirs at any time in the future shall ever disturb, hinder or molest them or any one of them or their heirs and assigns in their right, title and possession, nor shall we permit this to be done, nor cause it to be done by others our subjects or others whomsoever, as far as in us lies; nor shall we in any way remove them, their heirs and assigns from the said mainlands, countries, provinces and places for any cause afterwards arising or happening, nor shall we cause them to be removed or expelled by our subjects. Provided always that should it happen that the said Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis or any one of them, their heirs or assigns, or any one of these find, search out or recover in the future any places, islands, lands, regions, provinces or countries which heretofore have not been found discovered, searched out and recovered by others our subjects or by any of their heirs and assigns having authority from us in that region by other letters patent of ours under our Great Seal, then it is our wish and by these presents we grant for us and our heirs to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, and to any one of them, their heirs and assigns, that they and any one of them whosoever may and shall have power to enter, hold, administer and peaceably

and securely to inhabit and cause to be inhabited and to occupy at their free will the aforesaid islands, countries, provinces and other places with their ships, men, servants and chattels whatsoever, without hindrance or impediment from us or our heirs or from any others our lieges whomsoever. And that none of our other subjects shall dare to sail or to frequent any island, land, region, country and province or place thus newly found by the same Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, or to enter the same, for the purpose of acquiring or securing the fruits, wares and merchandise produced in the same, without obtaining our royal licence and the special one of the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, on pain of the loss and forfeiture of all the goods, merchandise, commodities, and ships whatsoever venturing to sail to and enter these places thus newly found by the same, namely: one half of these to be for us and the other half for the said Hugh, Thomas, John and Francis, their heirs and assigns.

And although by other letters patent of ours dated the nineteenth day of the month of May [*sic pro* March] in the sixteenth year of our reign [1501], we have given and granted to our well-beloved Richard Warde, John Thomas and John Fernandez, and to the aforesaid Hugh Eliot, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis Fernandez, their heirs, attorneys, factors or deputies, and to any of them whomsoever, power and authority to sail to all parts, regions and boundaries of the sea in order to find and recover and discover the islands, countries and provinces mentioned, and to pursue and carry out each of the other things contained and specified in the same letters according to the tenour and effect thereof; nevertheless we are unwilling that the same Richard Warde, John Thomas, and John Fernandez or any one of them, their heirs or assigns, should in any way enter, or that any one of them should enter or go near any of the countries, islands, lands, places or provinces found, recovered or discovered anew in the future under the authority and licence of any of these our present letters, unless they shall have first obtained leave from the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis.

And in case the said Richard Warde, John Thomas and John Fernandez, or any one of them, or their heirs or assigns, may wish, determine and decide to make their way to these islands, countries, regions and other places aforesaid with their ships and goods in order to acquire wares in the said islands, countries and other places aforesaid, or to send and depute thither any person or persons, that they and any one of them whosoever shall be obliged from time to time to pay, furnish and sustain all and every the costs and charges to be arranged at each voyage with the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis, namely:

any of them according to the amount of his share, as they may agree among themselves, as often as they shall undertake any voyage of this kind and make their way from this our realm to the countries and other places to be acquired and recovered as aforesaid. And furthermore since among the other things set out in the above-mentioned articles, we have granted to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis, that they and any one of them whosoever, their heirs and assigns, can and may conduct and transport into this our realm of England, as often as they please, during a period of five years, one vessel, of whatsoever burthen she be, loaded and freighted with all kinds of goods, merchandise and wares produced in the countries, islands, provinces, lands and places whatsoever aforesaid, without paying to us any customs, subsidies and other dues for the same, and freely dispose thereof; we now bearing in mind the praiseworthy intention which the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis entertain and practise to the honour and utility and contentment of this our realm, and considering their great costs and heavy charges, as well as the dangers both to their persons as to their goods and chattels whatsoever, which to all appearances they are about to incur in such a difficult, tempestuous, dangerous and distant maritime undertaking, of our abundant grace, have granted and given licence for us and our heirs to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis, and to any one of them whomsoever, their heirs and assigns, and to any one of these whomsoever, that they and any one of them whosoever may and can conduct and transport into this our kingdom, jurisdictions and territories, as often as it may please them, a second vessel of one hundred and twenty tons burthen, loaded and freighted with goods, commodities, jewels, gold and silver and other wares and merchandise produced in the countries, islands, provinces and other places by them thus henceforth newly to be recovered, during a period of five years from the date of the recovery of the islands and countries aforesaid next and immediately following, and there discharge her, and deal as they wish with the goods, commodities, merchandise, jewels and other things above stated, and the same shall be permitted and allowed to their heirs and assigns, and to any one of them whomsoever, freely and securely, without in any way paying to us any customs, subsidies or other dues for the same or any portion of the same. And this without any impediment, exaction, objection, annoyance or hindrance whatsoever from us or from our officers or servants whomsoever.

And furthermore since among other things contained and set forth in our letters patent dated at Westminster on the said nineteenth of May

[i.e. March], in the sixteenth year of our reign [1501], we, for certain considerations us moving, having granted to the aforesaid John Gonzales and Francis, that they should be for ever subjects and lieges of us and of our heirs, and in all lawsuits, quarrels, matters and affairs whatsoever should be held, considered, treated and governed as our true and faithful lieges born within this our realm of England, and not otherwise nor in any other manner; and that the same John Gonzales and Francis and all their children should pay or cause to be paid, and any one of them whosoever should pay or cause to be paid such customs, taxes and other dues for their goods, wares, merchandise and commodities brought into this our realm of England or carried out of this our said realm of England, as foreigners pay or are bound or accustomed to pay to us; and that the said John Gonzales and Francis should pay and either of them should pay to us and our heirs as many and as large customs, subsidies and other dues for their goods and merchandise as foreigners are bound to pay and deliver to us. We therefore for certain reasons us now moving, being unwilling that the aforesaid John Gonzales and Francis should be charged the customs and subsidies payable to us as foreigners for their goods, merchandise and wares as above stated, but wishing to shew them and each of them a further favour, of our special grace have given and granted and by these presents give and grant licence for us and our heirs to the aforesaid John Gonzales and Francis, that they and either of them, their heirs or the heirs of either of them pay such customs, subsidies and other dues for their goods, wares, merchandise and commodities whatsoever to be brought into this our realm of England or to be taken out of the same realm, as pay or are bound and accustomed to pay others our lieges born within our realm of England, our said letters patent made thence to the contrary notwithstanding. Provided always that the aforesaid John Gonzales and Francis under colour or cover of this concession or privilege of ours shall not introduce into our kingdom under their own names the goods of others as their own goods, on pain of the confiscation of the goods so introduced and of the loss of our aforesaid privilege; although express mention of the true annual value of the above or of the other gifts or concessions made by us before this time to the said Hugh Elyot, Thomas Aysshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis is in no wise set out in these presents, or any statutes, acts or ordinances or restrictions made, published, ordained or provided thence to the contrary, or any other circumstance, cause or matter whatsoever in any way notwithstanding.

And again of our further favour we have granted to the aforesaid Hugh, Thomas Asshehurst, John Gonzales and Francis our present letters patent

in our Chancery without payment to us of any fine or fee or of any fines or fees for the same or any part thereof or for our Great Seal in any way at the Exchequer of our said Chancery.

And we will and grant by these presents that the most Reverend father in God, William, bishop of London, custodian of our Great Seal, by the authority of this our present grant, shall cause to be prepared and sealed as many and such briefs, sealed with our Great Seal, and directed to the custodian or clerk of our Exchequer, for the discharge of the said fines and fees as and such as may be necessary and requisite for the same, without any other warrant or attendance being made before us in this matter.

In witness whereof, etc.

Witness ourself at Westminster on the ninth of December.

By the King himself and at the date, etc.

Original Latin, with translation, printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 70–91.

First printed (Rymer's *Foedera*, vol. XIII) in 1712.

NO. 44. PAYMENTS TO EXPLORERS BY HENRY VII, 1502–5

From British Museum, Add. MSS. 7099 (see above, No. 23).

		£	s.	d.
f. 72	17 Hen. VII, Jan. 7 [1502] To men of Bristoll that founde Thisle	0	100	0
f. 75	17 Hen. VII [*sic*, but really 18, as ann. 17 ended on Aug. 21], Sept. 23 [1502] To a mariner that brought an Egle		6	8
Ib.	Sept. 30 [1502] To the merchants of Bristoll that have bene in the newe founde Launde	20	0	0
f. 83	19 Hen. VII, Sept. 15 [1503] To Sir Walter Herbert servant for bringing of a brasell bowe & 2 rede arowes		6	8
f. 85	19 Hen. VII, Nov. 17 [1503] To one that brought Haukes from the Newfounded Island . . .	0	20	0
f. 87	19 Hen. VII, Apr. 8 [1504] To a preste that goith to the new Ilande	0	40	0
f. 95	20 Hen. VII [*sic*, but really 21], Aug. 25 [1505][1] To Clays goying to Richemount with wylde Catts & Popyngays of the Newfound Island, for his costs .	0	13	4

[1] Ord gives at the head of each page of his transcript the regnal year of the first entry on that page, but if the year changes in the course of the page he does not note the fact.

		£	s.	d.
Ib.	[same date] To Portyngales that brought Popyngais & catts of the mountaigne with other stuf to the king's grace	0	100	0

First printed in 1831. Here corrected from above MS.

NO. 45. PAYMENT OF PENSION TO JOÃO GONSALVEZ AND FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ, 1503–4

From the Bristol Customs Records in the Public Record Office.

E. 122. 20/12. View of Account, 19 Hen. VII, Michaelmas–Easter [*1503–4*].

[Among other payments.] ...And pay to John Gonsalus and to ffranciscus fernandus, esquires, for their annuity at the rate of xx^{li} a year, at the present time by the acquittance shown, x^{li}.

Here first printed.

NO. 46. THE COMPANY ADVENTURERS TO THE NEW FOUND LANDS, 1506

From the Public Record Office, Early Chancery Proceedings, Bundle 247, No. 51.

[Internal evidence in Nos. 48–50 of the same Bundle fixes the date of this document as 1506, c. October.] Thes be the parcelles that William Clerk of London, merchant, hath delyvered in wares and merchandises and payd in redy mony att dyvers tymes to hewghe Eliott of Brystow, merchant:

Item, the said william Clerk payd by the commandement of the said hewghe to molyns, ropemaker of Bristowe. .	xl^{s}
Item, paid to the same ropemaker by the commandement of the same hewghe	xl^{s}
Item, paid to the same hewghe in hys owne proper person in gowlde	x^{li}
Item, receyvyd by the hondes of the same hewghe of the said William Clerk in sylver	vj^{li}
Item, receyvyd also of the same william Clerk v crownys of the sone	xx^{s} x^{d}
Item, delyvered to the same hewghe to [two] peaces of poledavys for sayles	xxxj^{s}
Item, payd for the same hewghe to Bartylmew Rede, late Alderman of london	xx^{li}

Item, payd for the same hewghe to the Company adventurers in to the new fownde ilondes . . . . . xx^{li}

Item, payd for the same hewghe in Redy mony and by his commandement to William Thorne. . . . . iiij^{li} x^{s}

Item, delyvered to the same hewghe in Naylys, poledavys, fflower, pypys of Bere, and pypys and redy mony that the same hewghe recyvyd by my commandement of phillipp ffox of Bristow, Berebruer . . . . . vj^{li} xiij^{s}

Item, to be allowed of the same hewghe for ffreyght. . xxij^{li} xvj^{s}

Item, in redy mony payd to the same hewghe and to other persons by hys commandement . . . . . xxj^{li} xvj^{s}

Item, for the lostes [? for "costes"] that the same hewghe causyd the said William to have in the viage for the Company Aventurers preparyd into the new fownd londes . . iiij^{li} xv^{s}

Item, for the mony that the said hewghe receyvyd of dyvers maryners by my commandement . . . . . iiij^{li} xv^{s}

Item, for xvj Tone and thre hoggesheddes that the said hewghe left unladyn in A schepe callyd the michell[1] . xviij^{li} viij^{s} vj^{d}

Summa totalis cxliiij^{li} xviij^{s} viij^{d}

Here first printed.

NO. 47. LITIGATION BETWEEN HUGH ELYOT AND FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ

From the Public Record Office, Early Chancery Proceedings, Bundle 135, No. 76.

Bill of Complaint of Francisco Fernandez.[2]

To the most Reverend fader in god, my lorde of Cantrebury, Chaunceler of Englond.

Mekly besecheth your goode and gracious lordship your contynuel Oratour ffraunces ffernandus Esquier, that where on hugh Elyot of Bristowe merchaunt commenced an accion of dette of c^{li} before the maire

[1] The preceding documents show that the ship *Michael* was not on this occasion engaged in the American expedition, but in a voyage to Spain in September, 1505, when Hugh Elyot sailed in her as cape merchant.

[2] This bill is undated, but is either prior to 1494 or subsequent to 1503, probably the latter. The Lord Chancellor was also Archbishop of Canterbury from 1486 to 1493 (John Morton) and from 1504 to 1515 (William Warham). From 1493 to 1500 Morton was Chancellor and Archbishop and also Cardinal, and is always so addressed in bills of that period.

and Constables of the constable court of Bristowe, which c^{li} is not dewe unto the seid hugh by your seid Oratour, as it appereth by indentures made betwyxt the seid hugh and your seid Oratour; this notwithstonding, the seid hugh of his malicious mynde will not declare upon the seid accion to thentent that your seid Oratour shuld not be maynprised but only to remayne in prison ayenst all right and good conscience; And for asmuch as your seid Oratour will make dewe proofe before your seid lordship that no peny of the seid c^{li} is dewe unto the seid hugh, but that the seid hugh is indetted unto your seid Oratour in clx [or lx]^{li}, in consideracion wherof, that your seid Oratour is without remedie by the cours of the common lawe of this lande, therfor that it wolde pleas your seid lordship, the premisses considered, to grant a corpus cum causa dirette to the seid mare and Constables of the same Court, and a sub pena ayenst the seid hugh, commandyng them by the same to brynge the bodie with the cause of arreste of your seid Oratour before the Kyng in his Chauncerie at a certeyne day by your lordship to be lymitted, ther to be examyned of and upon the premisses, and forthermore to be admonyshed as right and conscience requyreth, and this at the reverence of God and in the...of charite.

Here first printed.

V. THE NORTH WEST VOYAGE OF SEBASTIAN CABOT

NO. 48. GRANT OF PENSION TO SEBASTIAN CABOT, 1505, APRIL 3

From the Public Record Office, Exchequer, K. R. Memoranda Roll, 20 Hen. VII.

Pro Sebastiano Caboot.

Henry by the grace of God King of England and of France and lord of Irland. To the Tresourer and Barons of our Eschequer greting. Where we by oure othre lettres of prive seal bering date of thes presents have comaunded the custumers and collectours of oure custumes in our Town and poort of Bristowe, in consideracion of the diligent service and attendaunce that our wellbeloved Sebastian Caboot Venycian hath doon unto us in and aboute the same, to content and paye unto hym an annuytie of ten pounds sterlings to be taken and yerely percyved during our pleasure by the hands of our said custumers & collectours in our said poort of the revenues coming and growing yerely of our said custumes there, that is to say at the fest of Saint Michell tharchangell fyve pounds and at the fest of thannunciation of our blissed lady fyve pounds by even porcions, the first fyve pounds to be payde at the fest of thannunciation of oure lady next before the date herof as in oure said lettres is conteigned more at large. We therfor woll and charge you that in thaccompte or accompts which the said custumers and collectours be in yilding or shall yilde unto us of theire said office ye duly allowe acquite and discharge them of the said yerely annuitie of x li. according to oure graunt afore rehersed, any matier of cause you moeving to the contrary notwithstanding. Yeven undre our prive Seal at our manour of Grenewiche, the iij^{de} day of Aprill the xxth yere of our Reigne.

Printed in *English Historical Review*, vol. xxxvii, pp. 564–5; "An Early Grant to Sebastian Cabot", by A. P. Newton (1922).

First discovered by Professor Newton in 1922.

NO. 49. PETER MARTYR'S FIRST ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *De Orbe Novo Decades*, by Peter Martyr of Anghiera, Alcala, 1516, Dec. iii, lib. vi, f. 52.

Here we must philosophize somewhat, most blessed father,[1] and digress from cosmography to the causes of Nature's secrets. All men with one

[1] Pope Leo X, to whom the work is addressed.

accord assert that the seas flow to the westward as rivers flow down from mountains. On that account I am drawn into doubt as to the destination of these waters, which by rotation and continual attraction flow from the east as though pressing to the west, whence they are never to return; neither may the west be the more filled thereby, nor the east emptied. If we shall say they tend to the centre by the nature of heavy things, and shall hold the centre to be the equinoctial line, as many affirm, what centre shall be said to be so capacious and able to receive so many waters? Or what circumference shall be found wet? They who have searched those coasts find no likely reason;[1] many think there are great openings in a hidden corner of that great land to the west of the island of Cuba, which land we have said to be eight times greater than Italy: which openings may receive these swift waters, and thence discharge them to the westward, whence they may return to our east. Others say [the waters go] to the north. Some hold that this gulf in the great land is closed, and that the land trends to the north on the far side of Cuba so that it embraces those northern lands which the frozen sea surrounds beneath the pole, and that all its shores are continuous; whence they believe those waters to be diverted by the opposition of that great land, as with rivers one may see they are turned by their banks. But this is unsound. For those who have tried the frozen coasts and afterwards have gone to the west say that those waters flow likewise to the west, not swiftly however, but gently with a continual passage. A certain Sebastian Cabot has examined those [frozen coasts], a Venetian by birth but carried by his parents whilst yet a child[2] into the island of Britain, they going thither as the habit is of Venetians, who in the pursuit of trade are the guests of all lands. He equipped two ships at his own cost in Britain, and with three hundred men steered first for the north, until even in the month of July he found great icebergs floating in the sea and almost continuous daylight, yet with the land free by the melting of the ice. Wherefore he was obliged, as he says, to turn and make for the west. And he extended his course furthermore to the southward owing to the curve of the coastline, so that his latitude was almost that of the Straits of Gibraltar and he penetrated so far to the west that he had the island of Cuba on his left hand almost in the same longitude with himself. He, as he traversed those coasts, which he called the Bacallaos, says that he found the same flow of the waters to the west, although mild in force, as the Spaniards find in their passage to their southern possessions.[3] Therefore it is not only probable but

[1] Or, no such reasoning likely (rationem verisimilem nullam).

[2] pene infans. [3] I.e. the Antilles and the southern shore of the Caribbean.

necessary to conclude that between these two lands hitherto unknown[1] lie great straits which provide a passage for the waters flowing from east to west, which I judge to be drawn round by the attraction of the heavens in their rotation round the earth, but not to be blown out and sucked in again by the breathing of Demogorgon,[2] as some have supposed because perhaps they have been led to connect it with the flow and the ebb [of the tides]. Cabot himself called those lands the Baccallaos because in the adjacent sea he found so great a quantity of a certain kind of great fish like tunnies, called bacallaos by the inhabitants, that at times they even stayed the passage of his ships. He found also the men of those lands clothed in skins and not anywhere devoid of intelligence. He says there are great numbers of bears there, which eat fish. For the bears plunge into the midst of a shoal of those fish, and falling upon them with their claws grasping the scales draw them to shore and eat them; on which account, he says, the bears are less dangerous to men. Many say that they have seen copper ore in places in the hands of the inhabitants. I know Cabot as a familiar friend and sometimes as a guest in my house; for, having been summoned from Britain by our Catholic King after the death of the older Henry, King of Britain, he is one of our councillors, and is daily expecting shipping to be provided for him wherewith he may reveal this secret of Nature hitherto hidden.[3] I believe he will depart on that quest in the month of March in the coming year 1516. What things shall follow, Your Holiness shall learn from me, if it is given to me to live. Spaniards are not lacking who deny that Cabot was the first finder of the Baccallaos and do not allow that he went so far westwards. Now I have said enough of the straits and of Cabot.

Translated by Richard Eden in *Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India*, London, 1555. Here newly translated.

NO. 50. PETER MARTYR'S SECOND ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *Summario della Generale Istoria dell' Indie Occidentali, Libro Primo della Historia dell' Indie Occidentali*, Venice, 1534, f. 65.

There are those who think that the said waters always flow near the shores and coasts of the said land...and then turn northwards, where

[1] I.e. North America and South America.

[2] Demogorgon seems to be unknown to Dr Smith, but Richard Eden, the sixteenth century translator, says he is "the spirite of the Earth".

[3] I.e. the inter-continental strait through the Gulf of Mexico, above referred to.

none knows anyone yet who has found where the land ends, which, it is thought, is joined to Europe. But this last opinion conflicts with the voyage made by the very prudent and practical navigator Sebastian Cabot the Venetian, who when a child was taken to England by his father, and on the latter's death, being very rich and of an enterprising mind, thought that, as Christopher Columbus had done, so he too wished to discover some new part of the world. And at his own expense he equipped two ships and in the month of July set sail between the west and the north, and sailed so far that with the quadrant he observed the pole star to be elevated 55 degrees, where he found the sea full of large masses of ice which drifted hither and thither, and the ships were in great danger of colliding with them. In that region the nights are not like ours, for the interval between the setting and the rising of the sun was clear, as at home in summer until the twenty-fourth hour.

And by reason of the said ice he was obliged to turn back and make his way along the coast which runs at first for a while in the southerly direction, [and] then turns west, and because in that part he found a great number of very large fish, which swim in shoals near the shores, and understood from the inhabitants that they called them Baccalai, he called this the Land of the Baccalai. Having had some communication with these inhabitants, he found them of good intelligence, with their bodies covered with the skins of various animals. In this place and for the remainder of the voyage which he made back along this coast towards the west, he said that he always found the waters running westwards towards the gulf that, it had been reported, the said land makes. I will not omit a sport which the said Sebastian Cabot mentions having seen with all his companions, to their great delight, namely that many bears which are found in that country came to hunt these codfish in this fashion: near the shores are many tall trees, the leaves of which fall into the sea, and the cod come to feed on them in shoals. The bears, which eat nothing but these fish, stand in ambush on the shore, and when they see the approach of the shoals of these fish, which are very large and shaped like tunny, they rush into the sea, linked with another of their kind, and striking their claws under the scales, do not let them go and try to pull them on shore; but the cod, which are very strong, turn round and plunge into the sea, so that, these two creatures being grappled together, it is a great sport to see now the one under the water and now the other on top, splashing the foam into the air; and in the end the bear pulls the cod ashore and eats him. For this reason it is thought that such a large number of bears are no detriment to the men of the country.

NO. 51. PETER MARTYR AND THE DATE OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *De Orbe Novo Decades*, Alcala, 1530, Dec. vii, f. xcii b. (The 1530 edition was the first to contain the Seventh Decade, which had been written in 1524.)

Let us return to that country from which we have digressed: either the Bacchalaos discovered by Cabot from England sixteen years ago (anno abhinc sexto decimo), or the Bacchalais, of which more elsewhere; these lands I suppose to be contiguous.

NO. 52. MARCANTONIO CONTARINI'S REPORT ON SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From a MS. in the Imperial Library of Vienna.

Marcantonio Contarini, 1536. Report read in the Senate [of Venice]. Sebastian Cabot, the son of a Venetian, who went into England with the Venetian galleys with the desire of discovering countries,...had two ships from Henry, King of England, father of the present Henry, who has become a Lutheran and worse, and with 300 men navigated so far that he found the sea frozen...whence it was necessary for Cabot to turn back without effecting what he intended, but with a resolve to return to that project at a time when the sea should not be frozen. He found the King dead, and his son cared little for such an enterprise.[1]

Original Italian in *Raccolta di Documenti e Studi dalla R. Commissione Colombiana*, Parte III, vol. I, Rome, 1892, p. 137.

NO. 53. THE MANTUAN GENTLEMAN'S DISCOURSE ON SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *Primo Volume delle Navigationi et Viaggi*, by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Venice, 1550, ff. 398–403.

These are the greatest changes and variations of voyages which the spice trade has made in the space of 1500 years, of which having written as much as I have been able to extract from books ancient and modern and from persons who have been there in our times, it seems fitting for me not to grow weary in any way, but to relate a great and admirable

[1] This implies that the voyage began before, and ended after, April 21, 1509, the date of Henry VII's death.

discourse which I heard some months ago, together with the excellent architect M. Michele di San Michele in the comfortable and delightful house of the excellent Messer Hieronimo Fracastoro, called Caphi, situated near Verona on the top of a hill which overlooks the entire Lake of Garda. The which discourse my mind does not suffice to write down exactly as I heard it, because it would need an intelligence and memory other than mine, but I will endeavour summarily and, as it were, by points to relate as much as I may remember. In this place Caphi then, having gone to visit the said excellent Messer Hieronimo, we found him accompanied by a Mantuan gentleman, a very great philosopher and mathematician, who then showed an instrument made on a celestial movement newly discovered, the name of which person out of respect to him is not mentioned. And having discoursed together for a long time about this new movement, to distract their minds somewhat they had a large globe brought in, giving details of all the world, on which this gentleman began to speak, saying that all studious men were greatly obliged and indebted to their serene highnesses the Kings of Portugal of a hundred years ago, in that they had spent infinite treasures, not in any war against Christians but in discovering new lands which had been hidden for so many centuries.... And having made a pause, turning to us he said: "Do you not know in this connexion of going to find the Indies by the north west, what has already been done by a Venetian citizen of yours, who is so worthy and experienced in things pertaining to navigation and cosmography that in Spain there is not now his equal, and his virtue has caused him to be set over all the pilots who sail to the West Indies, so that without his licence they cannot make the voyage, and for this reason he is called the Pilot-Major?" And replying to us, who did not know this, he went on to say that, finding himself some years ago in the city of Seville, and desiring to learn of these voyages of the Castilians, it was told him that there was a very valiant Venetian who had the charge of such voyages, named Signor Sebastian Cabot, who could make sea charts with his own hand and knew the art of navigation better than anyone else. "Unexpectedly I met this man and found him a most amiable and courteous person, who was very kind to me and showed me many things, and amongst others a large map of the world with the navigations set forth, both of the Portuguese and the Castilians. And he told me that, his father having left Venice many years ago and having gone to England to trade, he took him with him to the city of London, when he [Sebastian] was rather young, but not before he had learnt his humanities and the sphere. His father died at the time when news came that Signor Don Christophoro

Colombo the Genoese had discovered the coast of the Indies, and it was much spoken of in the court of King Henry VII, who then reigned, where they said it was a thing rather divine than human to have found that way never before known to go to the East where the spices are produced. 'Whence there was born in me [said Sebastian Cabot] a great desire and an eagerness of heart that I should do some signal deed also, and knowing by reason of the sphere that if I sailed by way of the north west I should have a shorter road to find the Indies, I at once communicated my thought to his majesty, who was very pleased and equipped for me two caravels with all things needful, and it was, I believe, in 1496 at the beginning of summer. And I began to sail towards the north-west, thinking not to find land until I came to Cathay, and from thence to turn towards the Indies. But at the end of some days I discovered land, which ran to the north, which greatly displeased me; and then going along the coast to see if I could find some gulf which turned, it fell out that having gone as far as 56 degrees under our pole, seeing that there the coast turned eastwards, and despairing of finding a gulf, I turned back to examine again the same coast from that region towards the equinoctial, always with the purpose of finding a passage to the Indies, and came as far as that part now called Florida. And, my victuals being short, I decided to return to England, where, on my arrival, I found great disturbances, of the people in rebellion and of a war with Scotland. There was no further thought of sailing to those parts, for which reason I came to Spain, to the Catholic King and to Queen Isabella, who having heard what I had done received me and made good provision for me, arranging for me to sail along the coast of Brazil, in order to explore it, on which voyage I found a very great and wide river, now called La Plata. I wished to navigate it and ascended it more than 600 leagues, finding it always most beautiful and inhabited by multitudes of people, who in wonderment ran to see me, and into which an incredible number of tributaries run. I made afterwards many other voyages, which I pretermit, and at last finding myself old I wished to rest, so many experienced and valiant young sailors having come to the fore; and now here I am with this charge that you know of, enjoying the fruits of my labours.' This is what I learned from Signor Sebastian Cabot".

NO. 54. RAMUSIO'S NOTES ON SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *Terzo Volume delle Navigationi et Viaggi*, by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Venice, 1556, f. 4.

Up to the present day we are not clear if it [i.e. New France] is joined with the land of the province of Florida and of New Spain, or if it is all split up into islands, and if by that way it is possible to go to the province of Cathay; as was written to me, many years ago, by Signor Sebastian Cabot our Venetian, a man of great and rare experience in the art of navigation and in the science of cosmography: who had sailed beyond that land of New France at the expense of King Henry VII of England. And he told me how, having gone on for a long time towards the west and a quarter north along the islands situated by the side of the said land, at the latitude of 67½ degrees under our pole, on the 11th of June, and finding the sea open and without any obstacle, he firmly believed that by that way he could pass towards Eastern Cathay, and he would have done it if the ill-will of the master and sailors, who were mutinous, had not compelled him to turn back.

Ibidem, f. 417.

Of that land [i.e. the Baccalaos] Signor Sebastian Cabot, our Venetian, had great knowledge, who at the expense of King Henry VII of England traversed all the said coast as far as 67 degrees, but owing to the cold was forced to turn back.

NO. 55. GOMARA'S ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *La historia general de las Indias*, by Francisco Lopez de Gomara, Saragosa, 1552, f. xx.

The Bacallaos.

There is a great tract of land and coast which is called Bacallaos, and its greatest latitude is forty-eight and a half degrees. The people there call a species of large fish bacallaos, of which there are so many that they impede ships in sailing. And he who brought news of that land was Sebastian Cabot the Venetian, who equipped two ships in England, where he had lived since he was a child, at the cost of King Henry VII, who desired to trade in the spice region as did the King of Portugal; others say at his own cost. And he promised King Henry to go by the north to Cathay, and to bring thence spices in a shorter time than the Portuguese did by the south. He went also to learn what sort of land the

Indies were to inhabit. He took three hundred men and went by way of Iceland to the cape of Labrador[1] until he reached fifty-eight degrees, although he himself says much more, relating that there were in the month of July such cold and so many pieces of ice that he dared not go farther; and that the days were very long and almost without night, and the nights very clear. It is a fact that at sixty degrees the days are eighteen hours long. Cabot then seeing the cold and strangeness of the land set his course towards the west, and refreshing himself at the Bacallaos he followed the coast as far as thirty-eight degrees and returned thence to England. Bretons and Danes have been also to the Bacallaos, and Jacques Cartier the Frenchman was there twice with three galleons, once in 1534, and again in 1535, and examined the land with a view to peopling it from forty-five to fifty-one degrees. They say that they are peopling it or will do so, as being a good land like France, since it is open to all and especially to those who shall first occupy it.

NO. 56. ANDRÉ THEVET'S ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique, autrement nommé Amérique*, by André Thevet, Paris, 1558, f. 148 b.

Coasting then with Florida on our left, because of the wind which was contrary, we approached very close to Canada and to another country that is called Baccalos, to our lasting great regret and disadvantage, on account of the extreme cold, which troubled us for the space of eighteen days: so far does this land of Baccalos project into the open sea from the direction of the north, in the form of a point, for quite two hundred leagues, in a latitude from the equator of forty-eight degrees only. This point has been called that of the Baccales by reason of a kind of fish which is found in the adjacent sea, which fish they name *Baccales*, between which point and the Cape del Gado there are various inhabited islands, difficult at all times to approach because of the plentiful rocks with which they are surrounded; and they are named the islands of Cortes. Others do not think they are islands, but a main land connected with this point of Baccalos. It was discovered in the first place by Sebastian Babate [Cabot], an Englishman, who persuaded Henry the Seventh, King of England, that he would go easily by that way, towards the north, to the country

[1] By contemporary usage "Labrador" generally meant Greenland, and the context makes it obvious that it does so here.

of Cathay, and that by these means he would find spices and other things, just as the King of Portugal did in the Indies; in addition to which he proposed to go to Peru and America to people those countries with new inhabitants and establish there a new England. Which project he did not execute: the truth is that he put quite three hundred men on land, in the direction of Iceland[1] towards the north, where the cold killed almost the entire company, although it was in the month of July.

NO. 57. GALVANO'S ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From the *Tratado* of Antonio Galvano, Lisbon, 1563.

In the year 1496 a Venetian named Sebastian Cabot, being in England and having information of such a new discovery as this [i.e. of Columbus] was, and seeing by a globe that the islands above mentioned were almost in the same latitude as, and much nearer to, his country [England] than to Portugal or Castile, he explained the matter to King Henry VII, wherewith the king was so well pleased that he ordered two ships to be equipped. He [Cabot] sailed in the spring with three hundred companions, set his course to the west until he sighted land in forty-five degrees of north latitude, and went on by that land to sixty degrees, where the days are eighteen hours long and the nights are very clear and bright. They found great cold there and many icebergs, so that they had no bottom in seventy, eighty and a hundred fathoms, but found great cold, by which they were discommoded. And so from thence finding the coast to turn to the east, they passed along it on the other tack discovering every bay, river [and] creek to see if it passed to the other side, and so went on, diminishing the latitude, to thirty-eight degrees, whence they returned to England. Others say that he reached the cape of Florida, which is in twenty-five degrees.

Translated from Galvano's text, reprinted by the Hakluyt Society (ed. Vice-Admiral C. R. D. Bethune), London, 1862, pp. 87–9.

[1] "Irlande" in original, but the meaning must be Iceland. The last sentences arouse a suspicion that Thevet, in speaking of Peru, was mixing the voyage of Henry VII's time with a project that was discussed with Cabot under Edward VI; and this leads to a further possibility that the three hundred men frozen in the north were really Willoughby's crews of 1553, since the Willoughby expedition was promoted by Sebastian Cabot. One can hardly set a limit to the vagueness and inaccuracy of André Thevet. See below pp. 234–5.

NO. 58. CHAUVETON'S ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *Histoire Nouvelle du Nouveau Monde, extraite de l'Italien de M. Hierosme Benzoni Milanois,* by Urbain Chauveton, Geneva, 1579.

In the year 1507 there was a Venetian pilot, named Sebastian Cabot, [Gabotto], who undertook at the cost of Henry VII, King of England, to search for some passage to go to Cathay by the north [par la Tramontane]. He discovered the point of Baccalaos (which the mariners of Brittany and Normandy to-day call the Coast of Codfish), and higher still, as far as sixty-seven degrees from the Pole, but the cold and the great ice-masses, with which this northern sea is covered, compelled him to give up, and to return without doing anything.[1]

NO. 59. RICHARD EDEN'S NOTE ON SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *The Decades of the newe worlde or west India,* a translation of Peter Martyr of Angleria, by Richard Eden, London, 1555, Preface, leaf c. 1.

These regions are cauled Terra Florida and Regio Baccalearum or Bacchallaos of the which yow may reade sumwhat in this booke in the vyage of the woorthy owlde man yet lyving Sebastiane Cabote, in the vi. booke of the thyrde Decade.[2] But Cabote touched only in the north corner and most barbarous parte hereof, from whense he was repulsed with Ise in the moneth of July.

NO. 60. RIBAULT'S REFERENCE TO THE CABOT DISCOVERY

From *The Whole and true discovery of Terra Florida,* by Jean Ribault, London, 1563, ff. a ii–a iii.

Whereas in the yeare 1562 it pleased God to move your grace to chose and appoynt us to discover and vieu a certen long coste of the West Indea, from the hed of the lande called la Florida, drawing towardes the northe parte untill the hed of Britons, distant from the said hed of la Florida 900 leages, or therabout, to the ende that we might certifie you and make true reporte...it were nedefull to shewe howe manye from tyme to tyme have gon about to fynd owt this great land, to inhabite there, who never-

[1] Chauveton adds, at the end of this passage, the words: "Som. de Pierre Mart", meaning presumably that the account is summarized from Peter Martyr.

[2] Peter Martyr's account (see No. 49).

theles have alwaies failed and byn put by of there intention and purpose, some through feare of shipwracke, and some by great wyndes and tempestes that drove them backe, of the which ther was one a verry famyous strainger Sebastian Cabot, an excellent pilote, sent thither by the King of England, Henery the vijth, anno 1498,[1] and many others, who never could attayne to any habytation or take possession there of one only fote of ground.

First published as above. Revised text from British Museum, Sloane MSS. 3644, ff. 111–21, ed. by H. P. Biggar in *English Historical Review*, vol. xxxii (April, 1917), here quoted.

NO. 61. SIR HUMPHREY GILBERT'S ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From Gilbert's *Discourse* on the North West Passage, London, 1576 (written before 1566).

Furthermore, Sebastian Cabota by his personal experience and travel hath set foorth, and described this passage in his Charts, which are yet to be seene in the Queens Majesties privie Gallerie at Whitehall, who was sent to make this discovery by king Henrie the seventh, and entred the same fret [strait]: affirming that he sayled very farre Westward, with a quarter of the North, on the Northside of Terra de Labrador the eleventh of June, untill he came to the Septentrionall latitude of 67 degrees and a halfe, and finding the Seas still open, sayd, that he might, & would have gone to Cataia, if the mutinie of the Master and Mariners had not bene.

NO. 62. RICHARD WILLES ON SEBASTIAN CABOT'S MAPS AND DISCOVERIES

From *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies*, by Richard Willes, London, 1577.

ff. 231 b–232. Wel, graunt the West Indies not to continue continent unto the Pole, graunt there be a passage betwyxt these two landes, let the goulph lye neare us than commonly in cardes we fynde it set, namely, betwyxt the 61. & 64. degrees north, as Gemma Frisius in his Mappes and Globes imagineth it, and so left by our countriman Sebastian Cabote, in his table, the which my good Lorde your father [i.e. the Earl of Bedford]

[1] The date is as given in the printed version of 1563. In the MS. copy it is lost by mutilation of the page.

hath at Cheynies, and so tryed this last yeare by your Honours servaunt as hee reporteth, and his carde and compasse doe witnesse....

ff. 233–233 b. The fyrste objection is of no force, that generall table of the worlde set foorth by Ortelius or Mercator, for it greatly skilleth not, being unskylfully drawen for that poynt: as manifestly it may appeare unto any one that conferreth the same with Gemma Frisius universal mappe, with his round quartered carde, with his globe, with Sebastian Cabota his table, and Ortelius Generall Mappe alone, worthily preferred in this case before all Mercator and Ortelius other doinges: for that Cabota was not only a skilful sea man, but a long travailer, & such a one as entred personally that streiete, sent by King Henry the seventh to make this aforesaid discovery, as in his owne discourse of navigation you may reade in his carde drawen with his owne hands, the mouth of the north-westerne streict lieth neare the 318 Meridian, betwixt 61. and 64. degrees in elevation, continuying the same breadth about 10. degrees west, where it openeth southerly more and more, untyll it come under the tropike of Cancer, and so runneth into Mar de Zur, at the least 18 degrees more in breadth there, then it was where it fyrst began: otherwise I coulde as well imagine this passage to be more unlykely then the voyage to Moscovia, and more impossible then it for the farre situation and continuance thereof in the frosty clime: as nowe I can affyrme it to be very possible and most lykely in comparison thereof, for that it nether coasteth so farre north as the Moscovian passage doth, nether is this streicte so long as that, before it bowe downe southerly towardes the Sonne agayne.

NO. 63. GEORGE BESTE'S ACCOUNT OF SEBASTIAN CABOT'S VOYAGE

From *A true discourse of the late voyages of discoverie*, by George Beste, London, 1578, p. 16.

Also, the valor of the English men, did first of all discover and finde out all that part of America, whiche nowe is called Baccalaos: for Sebastian Cabot, an Englishe man, borne in Bristow, was by commandment of Kyng Henry the seaventh, in Anno 1508, furnished with shipping, munition, and men, and sayled all along that tract, pretending to discover the passage to Cataya, and went alande in many places, and brought home sundry of the people, and manye other things of that Countrey, in token of possession, beeing (I say) the firste Christians that ever there sette foote on land.

Also, the sayde Englishman Cabot, did first discover at the procurement of the King of Spayne, all that other porte [*sic*] of America, adjoyning nexte beyond Brasill, lying aboute the famous River called Rio de la plata.

NO. 64. SEBASTIAN CABOT'S MAPS AND PAPERS (1582)

From Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages*, London, 1582, repr. by Hakluyt Society, 1850, p. 26.

This much concerning Sebastion Gabotes discoverie may suffice for a present cast: but shortly, God willing, shall come out in print, all his owne mappes and discourses, drawne and written by himselfe, which are in the custodie of the worshipfull master William Worthington, one of her Majesties Pensioners, who (because so worthie monumentes shoulde not be buried in perpetuall oblivion) is very willing to suffer them to be overseene and published in as good order as may bee, to the encouragement and benefite of our Countriemen.

NO. 65. SEBASTIAN CABOT IN 1512

From British Museum, Add. MSS. 21481, f. 92 (Household Book of Henry VIII).

Anno iiij° primo die Maii [May 1st 1512] Item to Sebastyan tabot [*sic*] for making of a Carde of gascoigne and Guyon, in Rewarde, xxvj^{s} viii^{d}.

First printed in 1862.

NO. 66. KING FERDINAND TO SEBASTIAN CABOT, 1512, SEPT. 13

From the Spanish Archives (Archivo de Indias) at Seville.

[Logroño, Sept. 13, 1512.] The King: Sebastian Cabot. You are already aware how the reverend father in Christ, the Bishop of Palencia, my chief chaplain and one of my Council, and Lope Conchillos, my secretary and one of my Council, spoke to you on my behalf in the city of Burgos in regard to the navigation to the Indies and the Island of the Bacallaos [codfish], and it was agreed between you and them that on my writing to Lord Willoughby, your Captain, to allow you to come to court, you would come at once. I am now writing to him as you will see by the enclosed paper, asking him to allow you to come. Wherefore I beg and charge you that, on Lord Willoughby giving you the said permission, you come wherever I may be, in order that on your coming a proper agreement may be drawn up in regard to the matters whereof the said Bishop of Palencia and Secretary Conchillos spoke to you; and do not delay, for

in this you will do me a service. From Logroño, 13 September 1512. I the King. By order of His Highness, Lope Conchillos. Countersigned by the Bishop of Palencia.

Original Spanish with translation printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 115–16.

First printed in 1908.

VI. THE VOYAGE OF 1517

NO. 67. RICHARD EDEN'S NOTE ON THE VOYAGE OF 1517

From *A treatyse of the newe India*, a translation of Sebastian Munster's *Cosmography*, by Richard Eden, London (1553), Preface to the Duke of Northumberland, leaf aa iiij.

Which manlye courage (like unto that which hath ben seen and proved in your grace, aswell in forene realmes, as also in this oure countrey) yf it had not been wanting in other in these our dayes, at suche time as our soveraigne Lord of noble memorie Kinge Henry the VIII about the same yere of his raygne, furnished & sent forth certen shippes under the governaunce of Sebastian Cabot yet living, and one syr Thomas Perte, whose faynt heart was the cause that that viage toke none effect, yf (I say) such manly courage wherof we have spoken, had not at that tyme bene wanting, it myghte happelye have comen to passe, that that riche treasurye called *Perularia* (which is now in Spayne in the citie of Civile, and so named, for that in it is kepte the infinite ryches brought thither from the newe found land of *Peru*) myght long since have bene in the towre of London, to the kinges great honoure and welth of this his realme.

NO. 68. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FROM HENRY VIII TO FOREIGN PRINCES ON BEHALF OF THE EXPEDITION OF 1517

From the Public Record Office.

The King to all and singular, Christian Kings, Princes etc., to whom these present Letters shall come, Greeting.

Whereas our beloved and faithful subjects John Rastel, Richard Spicer, and William Howtyng, citizens of our city of London in England, for the accomplishing of certain business of ours and theirs, intend to journey to distant parts of the world, remote from our Kingdom of England,

We ask and conjure all and every of you in manifold ways, honourably and vehemently with all affection of the heart, as far as concerns the said John, Richard, and William, that when they or any of them shall seek to pass through the kingdoms, lordships and territories of yours or any of you or in any place, through respect for us and by the special intervention of our prayers, you will receive them favourably, admitting them with their servants and all other persons whatsoever conveyed in the ships or vessels of any of them, or being under the protection of any of them, with their goods, ships, vessels etc., by land and by sea and by inland waters; and that you will receive them kindly, there to dwell and tarry, either in

your cities, lands, towns etc. with their goods aforesaid, by day and night, on land and sea; and will permit them to go and return directly throughout your jurisdictions, as it shall please them, safely, freely and quickly, without payment of any tribute, toll etc. or any opening of wallets, letters, bundles etc. or any other scrutiny being made in this part, and without the exaction of any burden whatsoever, and without any hindrance or disturbance;

And also that you will provide safe and secure conduct for them at their reasonable charges, if it shall be necessary,

Not imposing on them nor on any of them in any manner, nor permitting to be imposed, on their bodies or goods, any injury, hindrance etc.; nay rather, that, if they ask it, you will do honour to our cause by imparting to their proceedings your counsel, assistance and favour;

Also that you will take care, if any harm or injury shall have been done to them or any of them in body or goods, that through our prayers and love it may be amended and made good to them speedily, We equally being ready to show ourselves most gracious to the subjects of yours or any of you who shall come into our kingdoms etc.;

Further, to all and singular you our deputies, mayors etc. under our obedience, as well this side as beyond the sea, we enjoin etc. so far as is in your sphere, that you maintain, protect and defend the said John, Richard and William, in the aforesaid matters, throughout our kingdoms etc., with their mariners etc., and their goods aforesaid:

Not imposing on them, or, as far as in you is, permitting to be imposed upon them by others, any injury etc. in any way aforesaid; nay even, if any injury etc. shall be inflicted on them or any of them, in their goods, servants or things, as aforesaid, you shall have it duly corrected and reformed without delay.

Given under our Great Seal at our Palace of Westminster, the fifth day of March [the 8th year of our reign].

Original Latin in T. Rymer's *Foedera*, vol. XIII, pp. 582–3. The "etc." stands in each instance for redundant verbiage in the original.

NO. 69. THE VOYAGE OF 1517

From the Records of the Court of Requests, 3/192.

John Rastell's Bill of Complaint.

To the kyng or sovereyn lord.

Pitiously compleynyth unto your gracious hyghness your pore subject John Rastell, that wher he entendid a viage unto the new found land by

your gracious mynd and assent, to whom your grace grantyd your letters under your grete seale directed as wel to all your subjects as to all other crestyn princes and theyr subjects for the furtherance of the same; and for the same viage your seyd orator reteynyd in his service John Ravyn to be purser of a shypp callyd the barbara; which seyd ravyn, contrarye to the trust that he was put in and contrarye to all trewthe, deseyved your seyd orator causyd and compelyd him to gyff up his viage to his gret losse; and furthermore after that your seyd orator had thus by compulsyon gyffyn up his viage, the seyd ravyn cam to the seyd shypp at falmouth and ther he and dyvers of the false mareners, that is to say Edward taylor, John brian, hunfrey dyke, servants to the seid Ravyn, with many mo of the lyke felons and robbers, put out of the seyd shipp one Richard Walker that was servant and factor to your seyd orator and there spoyled and toke away the goodes of the seyd orator beying in the sayd shypp, that ys to sey, fyne white flowre and bay salt, with certeyn pakks of frysis and canvas, and cofers of silks and tukes and other mercery ware, with divers other goodes and howsold stuff, as fedyr bedes, napery, pannes, pottes, and dyvers other wares, as salt hiddes, tallow and other thynges, as shall appere by percelles; which goodes amount to ye some off C pounds and above, whereof your seyd orator had nei(ther) rekonyng nor recompence unto this day to ye valew of one peny.

And now so it is that the seyd ravyn with many other of the seyd malefactors be now abydyng within the cyte of london, pleasyth it your gracious hyghnes, the premissis tenderly consideryd, as to send one of your offycers of the seriauntes of armes, or some other offycer of yours, to attach the seyd personnes to appere before your grace and your honorable counsell and there to make answere of theyr misdemeanours and robbery and to fynd suerti to make recompence to your orator of all that your grace or your honorable counsell shall there by ye law resonably adiugge. As your seyd orator shal dayly pray for the prosperous estate of your gracious hyghnes.

The answer of John Ravyn to the bill of complaynt of John Rastell.

The saide John Ravyn seyth that the saide bill is untrue, uncerteyn, and unsufficient to be answered to, and feyned of malice to thentent to put the saide John Ravyn to expences and trouble, and the matter therin conteyned matter clerly determynable, parti at the comyn lawe, and parte before thadmyrall of the See and not in this honourable Courte, wherunto he preyth to be remytted. And thadvauntage therof to hym savid if he be compelled to make ferther answer to the saide insufficient bill.

Ferther that as to the saide disseyt, compulsion, or lettyng of the saide John Rastell of his saide viage, takyng or spoilyng of any manner of goodes or wares, or any other myssdemeanour in the saide feyned bill submytted, that he is not therof ne of noo parte therof gyltie in manner and fourme as the said John Rastell bi his saide bill hath surmytted; all whiche matters the saide John Ravyn is redy to prove as this honourable Court shall awarde, and pryth to be dysmyssed oute of the same with his reasonable coste systeyned in this behailfe accordyng to the statutes in suche case provided.

First printed, by Prof. A. W. Reed, in *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. IX (1923), pp. 140–7.

NO. 70. THE EARLIEST ENGLISH DESCRIPTION OF AMERICA

From *A new Interlude and a mery of the Nature of the iiij Elementes*, by John Rastell (brother-in-law of Sir Thomas More), London, c. 1519.

Studyous Desire. Who thynke you brought here this fygure
[a map indicated]
Experyence. I wot not
Studyous Desire. Certes lorde nature
Hym selfe not longe agone
Whiche was here personally
Declarynge hye phylosophy
And lafte this fygure purposely
For humanytes instruccyon
Ex. Dowtles ryght nobly done
Stu. Syr this realme ye knou is callid Englande
Somtyme Brettayne I understonde
Therfore I prey you point with your hande
In what place it shulde lye
Ex. Syr this ys Ynglande lyenge here
And this is Skotlande that joyneth hym nere
Compassyd aboute every where
With the occian see rownde
And next from them westwardly
Here by hym selfe alone doth ly
Irelande that holsome grounde
Here than is the narowe seey
To Calyce and Boleyne the next wey

And Flaunders in this parte
Here lyeth Fraunce next hym joynynge
And Spayne southwarde from these standynge
And Portyngale in this quart
This contrey is callyd Italye
Beholde where Rome in the myddes doth ly
And Naples here beyonde
And this lytell see that here is
Is callyd the Gulfe of Venys
And here Venys doth stande
As for Almayne lyeth this way
Here lyeth Denmarke and Norway
And northwarde on this syde
There lyeth Iselonde where men do fyshe
But beyonde that so colde it is
No man may there abyde
This See is called the great Occyan
So great it is that never man
Coude tell it sith the worlde began
Tyll nowe within this xx. yere
Westwarde be founde new landes
That we never harde tell of before this
By wrytynge nor other meanys
Yet many nowe have ben there
And that contrey is so large of rome
Muche lenger than all Cristendome
Without fable or gyle
For dyvers maryners have it tryed
And sayled streyght by the coste syde
Above v. thousand myle
But what commodytes be within
No man can tell nor well Imagin
But yet not longe ago
Some men of this contrey went
By the kynges noble consent
It for to serche to that entent
And coude not be brought therto
But they that were they venteres
Have cause to curse their maryners
Fals of promys and dissemblers

That falsly them betrayed
Whiche wolde take no paine to saile farther
Than their owne lyst and pleasure
Wherfore that vyage and dyvers other
Suche kaytyffes have distroyed
O what a thynge had be than
Yf that they that be Englyshe men
Myght have ben the furst of all
That there shulde have take possessyon
And made furst buyldynge and habytacion
A memory perpetuall
And also what an honorable thynge
Bothe to the realme and to the kynge
To have had his domynyon extendynge
There into so farre a grounde
Whiche the noble kynge of late memory
The moste wyse prynce the vij. Herry
Causyd furst for to be founde
And what a great meritoryouse dede
It were to have the people instructed
To lyve more vertuously
And to lerne to knowe of men the maner
And also to knowe God theyr maker
Whiche as yet lyve all bestly
For they nother knowe God nor the devell
Nor never harde tell of hevyn nor hell
Wrytynge nor other scripture
But yet in the stede of God almyght
The honour the sone for his great lyggt
For that doth them great pleasure
Buyldynge nor house they have not at all
But wodes cotes and cavys small
No merveyle though it be so
For they use no maner of yron
Nother in tole nor other wepon
That shulde helpe them therto
Copper they have whiche is founde
In dyvers places above the grounde
Yet they dug not therfore
For as I sayd they have non yryn

Wherby they shuld in the yerth myne
To serche for any wore [? more]
Great habondance of woddes ther be
Moste parte vyr and pyne aple tre
Great ryches myght come therby
Both pyche and tarre and sope asshys
As they make in the eest landes
By brynnynge therof only
Fyshe they have so great plente
That in havyns take and slayne they be
With stavys withouten fayle
Nowe Frenchemen and other have founde the trade
That yerely of fyshe there they lade
Above an C. sayle
But in the south parte of that contrey
The people there go nakyd alway
The lande is of so great hete
And in the north parte all the clothes
That they were is but bestes skynnes
They have no nother fete
But howe the people furst began
In that countrey and whens they cam
For clerkes it is a questyon
Other thynges mo I have in store
That I coude tel therof but now no more
Tyll another season

Stu. Than at your pleasure shew some other thinge
Yt lyketh me so wel your commyninge
Ye cannot talke amys.

Ex. Than wyl I torne agayne to my matter
Of Cosmogryfy where I was ere
Beholde take hede to this
Loo estwarde beyonde the great occyan
Here entereth the see callyd Mediterran
Of ij. M. myle of lengthe
The Soudans contrey lyeth hereby
The great Turke on the north syde doth ly
A man of merveylous strengthe
This sayde north parte is callyd Europa
And this south parte callyd Affrica

This eest parte is callyd Ynde
But this Newe Landes founde lately
Ben callyd America bycause only
Americus dyd furst them fynde
Loo Ihrsin [Jerusalem] lyeth in this contrey
And this beyonde is the Red See
That Moyses maketh of mencyon
This quarter is India minor
And this quarter India major
The lande of Prester John
But northwarde this way as ye se
Many other straunge regions ther be
And people that we not knowe
But estwarde on the see syde
A prynce there is that rulyth wyde
Callyd the Cane of Catowe
And this is called the great eest see
Whiche goth all alonge this wey
Towardes the newe landis agayne
But whether that see go thyther dyrectly
Or if any wyldernes bytwene them do ly
No man knoweth for certeyne
But these newe landes by all cosmografye
Frome the Cane of Catous lande can not lye
Lytell paste a thousande myle
But from those new landes men may sayle playne
Estwarde and cum to Englande againe
Where we began ere whyle
Lo all this parte of the yerth whiche I
Have here discryvyd openly
The north parte we do it call
But the south parte on the other syde
Ys as large as this full and as wyde
Whiche we knowe nothynge at all
Nor whether the moste parte be lande or see
Nor whether the people that there be
Be bestyall or connynge
Nor whether they knowe God or us
Nor howe they beleve nor what they do
Of this we knowe nothynge

Lo is not this a thynge woonderfull
How that——
Et subito Studyouse Desire *dicat*
Pese syr no more of this matter
Beholde where Humanyte commeth here.

NO. 71. SEBASTIAN CABOT'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH VENICE, 1522

From the *Calendar of Venetian State Papers, 1520–6*, No. 607.

Gasparo Contarini to the Council of Ten.

According to your letter, of 27th September, I ascertained that Sebastian Cabot was at the court, and where he dwelt. I sent to say that my secretary had a letter for him from a friend of his, and that if he chose he might come to my residence. He told my servant he would come. He made his appearance on Christmas eve. At dinner time I withdrew with him, and delivered the letter, which he read, his colour changing completely during its perusal. Having finished reading it, he remained a short while without saying anything, as if alarmed and doubtful. I told him that if he chose to answer the letter, or wished me to make any communication in the quarter from whence I had received it, I was ready to execute his commission safely. Upon this he took courage, and said to me, "Out of the love I bear my country, I spoke heretofore to the ambassadors of the most illustrious Signory in England, concerning these newly discovered countries, through which I have the means of greatly benefiting Venice. The letter in question concerned this matter, as you likewise are aware; but I most earnestly beseech you to keep the thing secret, as it would cost me my life".

I then told him I was thoroughly acquainted with the whole affair, and mentioned how Hironimo the Ragusan had presented himself before the tribunal of their Excellencies the Chiefs, and that the most secret magistracy had acquainted me with everything and forwarded that letter to me. I added, that as some noblemen were dining with me, it would be inconvenient for us to talk together then, but that should he choose to return late in the evening we might more conveniently discuss the subject together at full length. So he then departed, and returned at about 5 p.m., when, being closeted alone in my chamber, he said to me:

"My Lord Ambassador, to tell you the whole truth, I was born at Venice, but was brought up in England, and then entered the service of their Catholic Majesties of Spain, and King Ferdinand made me captain, with a salary of 50,000 maravedis. Subsequently his present Majesty gave me the office of Pilot Major, with an additional salary of 50,000 maravedis, and 25,000 maravedis besides, as a gratuity, forming a total of 125,000 maravedis, equal to about 300 ducats.

"Now it so happened that when in England some three years ago, if I mistake not, Cardinal Wolsey offered me high terms if I would sail with an armada of his on a voyage of discovery. The vessels were almost ready, and they had got together 30,000 ducats for their outfit. I answered him that, being in the service of the King of Spain, I could not go without his leave, but if free permission were granted me from hence, I would serve him.

"At that period, in the course of conversation one day with a certain friar, a Venetian, named Sebastian Collona, with whom I was on a very friendly footing, he said to me, 'Master Sebastian, you take such great pains to benefit foreigners, and forget your native land, would it not be possible for Venice likewise to derive some advantage from you?' At this my heart smote me, and I told him I would think about it. So, on returning to him the next day, I said I had the means of rendering Venice a partner in this navigation, and of showing her a passage whereby she would obtain great profit; which is the truth, for I have discovered it.

"In consequence of this, as by serving the King of England I could no longer benefit our country, I wrote to the Emperor not to give me leave to serve the King of England, as he would injure himself extremely, and thus to recall me forthwith. Being recalled accordingly, and on my return residing at Seville, I contracted a close friendship with this Ragusan, who wrote the letter you delivered to me; and as he told me he was going to Venice, I unbosomed myself to him, charging him to mention this thing to none but the Chiefs of the Ten; and he swore to me a sacred oath to this effect."

I bestowed great praise on his patriotism, and informed him I was commissioned to confer with him and hear his project, which I was to notify to the Chiefs, to whom he might afterwards resort in person. He replied that he did not intend to manifest his plan to any but the Chiefs of the Ten, and that he would go to Venice after requesting the Emperor's permission, on the plea of recovering his mother's dowry, concerning which he said he would contrive that I should be spoken to by the Bishop of Burgos and the Grand Chancellor, who are to urge me to write in his favour to your Serenity.

I approved of this, but said I felt doubtful as to the possibility of his project, as I had applied myself a little to geography, and bearing in mind the position of Venice, I did not see any way of effecting this navigation, as the voyage must be performed either by ships built in Venice, or else by vessels which it would be requisite to construct elsewhere. Venetian-built craft must necessarily pass the gut of Gibraltar to get into the ocean;

and as the King of Portugal and the King of Spain would oppose the project, it never could succeed. The construction of vessels out of Venice could only be effected on the southern shores of the ocean, or in the Red Sea, to which there were endless objections. First of all, it would be requisite to have a good understanding with the Great Turk. Secondly, the scarcity of timber rendered shipbuilding impossible there. Then again, even if vessels were built, the fortresses and fleets of Portugal would prevent the trade from being carried on. I also observed to him that I did not see how vessels could be built on the northern shores of the ocean, that is to say, from Spain to Denmark, or even beyond, especially as the whole of Germany depended on the Emperor; nor could I perceive any way at all for conveying merchandise from Venice to these ships, or for conveying spices and other produce from the ships to Venice. Nevertheless, as he was skilled in this matter, I said I deferred to him.

He answered me: "You have spoken ably, and in truth neither with ships built at Venice, nor yet by the way of the Red Sea, do I perceive any means soever. But there are other means, not merely possible but easy, both for building ships and conveying wares from Venice to the harbour, as also spices, gold, and other produce from the harbour to Venice, as I know; for I have sailed to all those countries, and am well acquainted with the whole. Indeed, I assure you that I refused to accept the offer of the King of England for the sake of benefiting my country, for had I listened to that proposal, there would no longer have been any course for Venice".

I shrugged my shoulders, and although the thing seems to me impossible, I nevertheless would not dissuade him from coming to the feet of your Highness (without, however, recommending him), because possibility is much more unlimited than man often imagines; added to which, this individual is in great repute here. He then left me.

Subsequently, on the evening of St. John's Day, he came to me in order that I might modify certain expressions in the Ragusan's letter, which he was apprehensive would make the Spaniards suspicious. It was, therefore, remodelled, and written out again by a Veronese, an intimate of mine.

When discussing a variety of geographical topics with me, he mentioned, among other things, a very clever method observed by him, which had never been previously discovered by any one, for ascertaining by the needle the distance between two places from east to west, as your Serenity will hear from himself if he comes.

After this, continuing my conversation with him concerning our chief

matter, and recapitulating the difficulties he said to me, "I assure you the way and the means are easy. I will go to Venice at my own cost. They shall hear me; and if they disapprove of the project devised by me, I will return in like manner at my own cost".

He then urged me to keep the matter secret.

Valladolid, 31st. December 1522.

First printed in 1869.

NO. 72. THE PLANS FOR THE EXPEDITION OF 1521

From the Records of the Drapers' Company of London.

[1521, Mar. 1st.–Apr. 9.] An answer made to serten of the kinges counsell as consernyng the kinges shippes to be occupyed.

The first day of Marche here assembled my lord the maire, Sir Laurence Aylmer, M. Monoux, M. Milborn, M. Bayly, & M. Wylkynson, aldermen, M. Carter, M. Clerk, & M. Vaughan, Wardens & of the Counsell, M. Hawkyns, M. Cremor, M. Gaine, M. Rudston, M. Askue, M. Gentyll, M. Perpount, M. White, M. Champyon, M. Sadler, & M. Dolphyn, and at the said assembley yt was aggreed that the Wardens w^{t} M. Rudston, M. Perpount & M. Dolphyn shall common w^{t} the Wardens of other aunncyaunt ffeliships to knowe what aunswere were best to be made to M. Wynkfield & M. Broun, of the kynges counsell, concernyng the kinges shippys. And the same day, aftir assembley made at ffrere Austyns by wardens of dyvers companys, and aggreed all aftir one mynd, we made our aunswere in wryting & delyvered yt into the said counsell by thassent of this hows, the tenour where of is this that foloweth:

The aunswere of the Wardens of Drapers of London unto the reporte of Sir Robert Wynkfeld and Sir Wolston Broun, knyghtes, and of our Soverayn lord the kinges moste honorable counsell, ffirst where it hathe pleased the kinges highnes of his most gracious zele, good mynd, and tendre favour towardes his merchaundes of London had, as by the reporte of the foresaid Sir Robert and Sir Wolston unto the said Wardens lately made, ffor the whiche moste gracious zele, good mynd and tendre favour, all we ben naturally bounden to pray to God for his moste gracious and prosperous contynuance in good helth and long lyf. And as toching the taking or receyving of one of the kinges shipps, we say we have noo auctorite to bynd our hole company and ffeliship unto any suche charge. And also that in our company be but fewe Aventurors, saving onely in

to fflaunders, where unto requireth noo grete shipps. ffurthermore we say that if it be the kinges pleasur to caws to be manned, rygged, appareled and vitayled suche a ship as the company shall think convenient, that than we, the said wardens, shall applye us to labour our said company for to freght and laid the said ship to the best of our powers, having suche a resonable price of ye freght, as other shipps hath in lyke viage & lading. Also we think it is dowtfull that any English ship shalbe suffered to laid in Spayn & in other countres, by reason of such actes & statutes there made, after suche lyke maner as be made in Englond for gascon wyn & colles wood from Burdeux.

. . . . . .

The xi day of Marche here assembled M. Monoux, M. Milborn, M. Bayly & M. Wylkynson, Aldermen, M. Carter, M. Clerk, M. Vaughan, Wardens, the hole counsell, the lyverey & the hole body of the ffeliship, ryche & poure, and at the said assembley was redd openly unto them the Articles folowing, directed unto us by the Wardens of the Mercers from the kinges Counsell and to x other craftes of the moste Aunciant, in thies woordes, that is to say:

Certen nomber of shippes to be appoynted to go into the new fownd lande.

ffirst the king & my lord Cardinall & the Counsell thynketh aswele for his honour as for the generall welth of this his Realm that there be appoynted a certayn noumbre of ships to be prepared for a viage to be made into the newefound Iland.

And his gracious pleasur is, that it be opened unto the generaltie of merchauntes adventurers & to certayn companys to knowe there benevolent myndes there in.

And the demaund that is required of you is to furnyshe v shipps aftir this maner: The kinges Grace to prepare them in takyll, ordenaunce and all other necessaries at his charge, And also the king to bere the adventour of the said shipps, And the merchauntes & companys to be at the charge of the vitayling and mennys wages of the same shipps for one hole yere, and the shipps not to be above vj^{xx} ton a pece. And also it is the kinges pleasur that this Citie of London shalbe as hede Reulers for all the hole realm, for asmany Cites and Townes as be mynded to prepare any shipps forwardes for the same purpos & viage, as the Town of Bristowe hath sent up there knowlege, that they wyll prepare ij shipps; And if ye be mynded to doe as afore is resyted, his gracious pleasur is that x yere after, there shall no nacion have the trate but you.

And to have respyte for there custom xv monthes & xv monthes, and the said Wardens to make aunswere in wryting of the premisses aforesaid bitwen this & Wednysday next commyng.

The premisses considered, the Maister, Wardens & Counsell endeverd them furthwith wᵗ the best wordes, exortacion and diligence, to knowe the benivolent mynd of every man there assembled at that tyme, and also commaunded them that than were absent to come bifore my lord the maire and them the next morowe aftir. Soo that all there graunts amownted to a small somme. And my lord & maisters seying that, made there aunswer in form folowing, that is to say:

Answer made to byl sent by the Wardens of Mercers.

The aunswere of the Wardens of Drapers of London wᵗ thassent & consent of the moste parte of all there company, unto a byll lately sent unto them by the Wardens of the Mercers of London consernying the appoyntement of v shipps to be prepared towardes the Newefound Iland.

ffirst the foresaid Wardens & company of Drapers supposen and say, that if our Soverayne lord the kinges highnes, the Cardinalles grace and the kinges moste honorable counsell were duely & substauncially enformed in such maner as perfite knowlege myght be had by credible reporte of maisters & mariners naturally born wᵗ in this Realm of England, having experience, and excercised in and abowt the forsaid Iland, aswele in knowlege of the land, the due courses of the seey, thiderward & homeward, as in knowlege of the havenes, roodes, poortes, crekes, dayngers & sholdes there uppon that coste and there abowtes being, that than it were the lesse joperdy to aventur thider than it is nowe, all though it be ferther hens than fewe English maryners can tell.

And we thynk it were to sore aventour to joperd v shipps wᵗ men & goodes unto the said Iland uppon the singuler trust of one man, callyd as we understond, Sebastyan, whiche Sebastyan, as we here say, was never in that land hym self, all if he makes reporte of many thinges as he hath hard his ffather and other men speke in tymes past.

And also we say that if the said Sebastyan had bene there and were as connyng a man in & for thoos parties as any man myght be, having non other assistauntes of maisters & maryners of Englond, excercised & labored in the same parties, for to guyd there shipps & other charges than we knowe of, but onely trusting to the said Sebastyan, we suppos it were no wysdom to aventur lyves & goodes thider in suche maner, what for fere of syknes

or dethe of the said Sebastian, or for desevering of the said v shipps by nyght or by day, by force of tempestes or otherwyse, one from an other owt of syght, for than it shuld be gretely to dowte wheder ever thes v shipps shuld mete ayen in company or nay, for the said Sebastian cannot be but in one ship, than the other iiij^{or} shipps & men standes in grete perell, for lak of connyng maryners in knowlege of thoos parties, and to ordre & guyd them; and soo the vitaylles and mennys wages shalbe spent in vayn, and they glad to retorn homeward w^{t} small comforte, for it is said among maryners in old proverbe: he salys not surely that salys by an other mannys compas.

Also we say that it is not possible that the said v shippes, besides there Balast, may receyve the vitaylles to suffice so many men for one hole yere, soo that we think verely that in this adventour can be percevyed any advauntage or profeit to growe unto any man, but rather losse and damage, besides the gretest joperdy of all, whiche is mennys lyves.

Than aftir that this our Aunswere and the Aunswers of x other crafts were debated & resoned among them all at Saynt Thomas of Akers, they aggreed to send furth the Governour and iiij^{or} Wardens of divers misters unto my lord Cardynall w^{t} this commyssion folowing:

Here aftir foloweth the Articles that the commissioners sent to my lord Cardynall from the Wardens of xj companys to be spoken in the behalf of the said Wardens.

ffyrst the foresaid Wardens sayen that there companys be wyllyng to accomplishe the kinges desire and pleasur in furnysshing of ij shippys accordingly, and they suppos to furnyssh the thryd, soo that one may bere w^{t} an other indifferently of xj ffelishippes assembled w^{t} the Aldermen of the same, And also uppon certayn articles to them to be graunted by the kinges highnes & his honorable Councell.

And the said wardens desyre to have longer respyte for a full aunswere therein to be yeven.

The said commissioners brought aunswere fro my lord Cardynall that the king wold have the premisses to goo furth and to take effect. And there uppon my lord the maire was send for to speke w^{t} the king for the sam matier, so that his grace wold have no nay there in, but spak sharpely to the maire to see it putt in execucion to the best of his power.

ffor the same purpose the xxvj day of Marche my lord the Maire commaunded the hole company of all this fraternite to assemble bifore hym at the Drapers hall, where was w^{t} grete labour & deligence & many divers warnynges, graunted first & last ij^{c} marces, presentyd by a byll to the maire, the ixth day of Aprill in this maner:

ij^{c} marcks grauntyd towart maryners wages & rygging of shippes to the new found land.

The Maister and Wardens of Drapers of London in the names of all there company graunten of there benevolent myndes to pay towardes maryners wages and vitayling of certayn shippes for one viage to be made by the grace of God into the Newfound Iland ij^{c} marces under suche condicion as shalbe articled bitwen the kinges moste Noble counsell and the Adventurers of the said cite of London unto the foresaid Iland, the names of the payers & their severall sommes for the said ij^{c} marces appereth in the iijd leef following.

. . . . . .

Here aftir foloweth the Names[1] of them that graunted to pay unto the charges of the viage to be made into the newefound Iland ij^{c} marcs.

Original MS. in Wardens' Manuscript Accounts, Drapers' Company, London, VII, ff. 86–7. Printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 134–8. First printed (in part) in 1837.

[1] The names are given by Biggar, but here omitted.

VIII. THE VOYAGE OF 1527

NO. 73. A PROJECTED SPICE TRADE, C. 1525

From *Castigatissimi Annali*, by Agostino Giustiniani, Genoa, 1537, lib. vi, f. cclxxviii.

[Anno. 1525.] And at that time Paulo Centurione was well instructed in cosmography and attempted an enterprise of great importance, which was to bring the spices and other merchandise of Calicut and Tauris into our parts of Europe by way of Muscovy, a thing which the Portuguese were much in fear of, and which was able to produce a very useful result, as it appeared to those who were wise and intelligent. But Paulo did not receive the support which he deserved in such an enterprise, in the course of which he made two or three journeys from Italy into Muscovy, which appeared to him a very easy matter; and by his persuasion the Duke of Muscovy sent an ambassador to Pope Clement, and treated with his holiness about accepting the Catholic faith in the Latin manner, since he was a Christian according to the Greek rite. And on his side the Pope sent into Muscovy the bishop of Potentia, who, I believe, died in that journey. And Pope Clement was nevertheless aware to some extent of the labour and goodwill of Centurione, but scarcely as they deserved. And Paulo then passed into England, and was well received by the king, who promised him certain ships to go and discover new countries. But the good and industrious Paulo fell sick in London and went to discover the countries of the other world.

NO. 74. GRAFTON'S CHRONICLE ON THE VOYAGE OF 1527

From *A Chronicle at large . . . of the Affayres of Englande*, by Richard Grafton, London, 1569 (modern ed., 1809, vol. II, p. 393).

[1527, May.] This same moneth the king sent two fayre shippes, well manned and vitayled, havyng in them divers cunnyng men, to seeke straunge Regions: and so forth they set out of the Thamys the xx day of May, if they sped well you shall heere at their returne.

NO. 75. HAKLUYT'S ACCOUNT OF THE VOYAGE OF 1527

From Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (Maclehose edition), vol. VIII, pp. 1–2.

The voyage of the two ships, whereof the one was called the Dominus vobiscum, set out the 20 day of May in the 19 yere of king Henry the eight,

and in the yere of our Lord God 1527, for the discoverie of the North partes.

Master Robert Thorne of Bristoll, a notable member and ornament of his country, as wel for his learning, as great charity to the poore, in a letter of his to king Henry the 8 and a large discourse to doctor Leigh, his Ambassadour to Charles the Emperour, (which both are to be seene almost in the beginning of the first volume of this my work) exhorted the aforesaid king with very waighty and substantial reasons, to set forth a discovery even to the North Pole. And that it may be knowne that this his motion tooke present effect, I thought it good herewithall to put downe the testimonies of two of our Chroniclers, M. Hall, and M. Grafton, who both write in this sort. This same moneth (say they) king Henry the 8 sent 2 faire ships wel manned & victualled, having in them divers cunning men to seeke strange regions, & so they set forth out of the Thames the 20 day of May in the 19 yeere of his raigne, which was the yere of our Lord, 1527.

And whereas master Hal, and master Grafton say, that in those ships there were divers cunning men, I have made great enquirie of such as by their yeeres and delight in Navigation, might give me any light to know who those cunning men should be, which were the directors in the aforesaid voyage. And it hath bene tolde me by sir Martine Frobisher, and M. Richard Allen, a knight of the Sepulchre, that a Canon of Saint Paul in London, which was a great Mathematician, and a man indued with wealth, did much advance the action, and went therein himselfe in person, but what his name was I cannot learne of any. And further they told me that one of the ships was called The Dominus vobiscum, which is a name likely to be given by a religious man of those dayes: and that sayling very farre Northwestward, one of the ships was cast away as it entred into a dangerous gulph, about the great opening, betweene the North parts of Newfoundland, and the countrey lately called by her Majestie, Meta Incognita. Whereupon the other ship shaping her course towards Cape Briton, and the coastes of Arambec, and oftentimes putting their men on land to search the state of those unknowen regions, returned home about the beginning of October, of the yere aforesayd. And thus much (by reason of the great negligence of the writers of those times, who should have used more care in preserving of the memories of the worthy actes of our nation,) is all that hitherto I can learne, or finde out of this voyage.

NO. 76. JOHN RUT'S LETTER TO HENRY VIII, 1527, AUG. 3

From *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, by Samuel Purchas, London, 1625 (modern ed., Glasgow, 1906, vol. XIV, pp. 303–5).

Wee will recreate you with a plaine Mariners Letter endorsed in homely phrase, To the Honourable Kings Grace of England, here (as I thinke) given you from the Originall. I have also another written to Cardinall Wolsey touching the same voyage in Latin, by Albertus de Prato; for the antiquitie, rather then any remarkable raritie, worthy here to be mentioned. [Irrelevant matter follows, here omitted.] I mentioned before Master Thornes fathers finding New-found Land, with Master Eliot. These animated King Henrie the eight to set forth two ships for discoverie, one of which perished in the North parts of New-found Land. The Master of the other, John Rut, writ this Letter to King Henrie, in bad English and worse Writing. Over it was this superscription.

Master Grubes two ships departed from Plymouth the 10. day of June, and arrived in the New-found Land in a good Harbour, called Cape de Bas, the 21. day of July: and after we had left the sight of Selle [Scilly], we had never sight of any Land, till we had sight of Cape de Bas.

Pleasing your Honourable Grace to heare of your servant John Rut, with all his company here, in good health, thanks be to God, and your Graces ship, The Mary of Gilford, with all her [1] thanks be to God: And if it please your honourable Grace, we ranne in our course to the Northward, till we came into 53. degrees, and there we found many great Ilands of Ice and deepe water, we found no sounding, and then we durst goe no further to the Northward for fear of more Ice, and then we cast about to the Southward, and within foure dayes after we had one hundred and sixtie fathom, and then wee came into 52. degrees and fell with the mayne Land, and within ten leagues of the mayne Land we met with a great Iland of Ice, and came hard by her, for it was standing in deep water, and so went in with Cape de Bas, a good Harbor, and many small Ilands, and a great fresh River going up farre into the mayne Land, and the mayne Land all wildernesse and mountaines and woods, and no naturall ground but all mosse, and no inhabitation nor no people in these parts: and in the woods wee found footing of divers great beasts, but we saw none not in ten leagues. And please your Grace, the Samson and wee kept company

[1] Blank space of about four words in original.

all the way till within two dayes before wee met with all the Ilands of Ice, that was the first day of July at night, and there rose a great and a marvailous great storme, and much foule weather; I trust in Almightie Jesu to hear good newes of her. And please your Grace, we were considering and a writing of all our order, how we would wash us and what course wee would draw, and when God doe send foule weather, that with the Cape de Sper shee should goe, and he that came first should tarry the space of sixe weeks one for another, and watered at Cape de Bas ten dayes, ordering of your Graces ship and fishing, and so departed toward the Southward to seeke our fellow: the third day of August we entered into a good haven, called Saint John, and there we found eleven saile of Normans, and one Brittaine, and two Portugall Barkes, and all a fishing, and so we are readie to depart toward Cape de Bas, and that is twentie five leagues, as shortly as we have fished, and so along the coast till we may meete with our fellow, and so with all diligence that lyes in me toward parts to that Ilands that we are commanded by the grace of God, as we were commanded at our departing: And thus Jesu save and keepe your honorable Grace, and all your honourable Rever[ences], in the Haven of Saint John, the third day of August, written in haste. 1527.

By your servant John Rut, to his uttermost of his power.

I have by me also Albert de Prato's originall letter, in Latin stile, almost as harsh as the former English, and bearing the same date, and was indorsed, Reverend. in Christo Patri Domino Domino Cardinali & Domino Legato Angliae: and began, Reverendissime in Christo Pater salutem: Reverendissime Pater, placeat Reverendissimae paternitati Vestrae, scire, Deo favente postquam exivimus a Plemut quae fuit x Junii, &c. (the substance is the same with the former and therefore omitted). Datum apud le Baya Saint Johan in Terris Novis, die x Augusti, 1527. Rever. Patr. vest. humilis servus, Albertus de Prato. (the name written in the lowest corner of the sheet).

NO. 77. OVIEDO'S ACCOUNT OF JOHN RUT'S EXPEDITION

From *Historia General das Indias*, by Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, 1535 (modern ed., Madrid, 1852), lib. XIX, cap. xiii.

In the year 1527 an English corsair, under pretext that he was going to discover, came with a great ship in the direction of Brazil on the coast

of Tierra Firme,[1] and from there crossed over to this Isla Española and came near to the mouth of the port of this city of Santo Domingo; and sent his boat fully manned and asked leave to enter here, saying that he came with merchandise and desiring to treat; and on the instant the alcaide Francisco de Tapia commanded a shot to be fired at the ship, which was coming straight to the port. And when the English saw this they retired outside, and those in the boat turned and went after their ship. And in truth the alcaide made a mistake in that which he did, for supposing he had come in armed, he could not have got out against the will of this city and of this castle. Accordingly, seeing the reception that was being made for them, they drew off in the direction of the island of San Juan, and having entered into the bay of San German they had speech with the people of that town and begged for provisions, complaining of the people of this town [Santo Domingo], saying that they came not to annoy but to treat with their money and merchandise, if they would receive them; and some provisions were given to them, and their ship gave in payment pewter and other things, and went on her way in the direction of Europe, where it is supposed that she never arrived, because no news was ever had of this ship.

Translated by F. A. Kirkpatrick in *English Historical Review*, vol. xx, p. 120.

NO. 78. AN ENGLISH SHIP FROM THE NORTH WEST AT THE ISLAND OF MONA, 1527

From the Archivo de Indias at Seville.

The Statement obtained from the English ship when at the Island of Mona on her way to Hispaniola.

That while he [Gines Navarro] was loading the said caravel with cassava, last Tuesday, the nineteenth of the present month of November, there arrived a vessel of 250 tons burden, and three main-tops; and taking her for a ship from Spain, he went towards her in his boat. And they came off in their pinnace manned by 25 or 30 men with as many as 25 men in the boat and the captain of the said ship in command. All were armed with corselets, bows and arrows and some cross-bows; and in the bow were two lombards, the matches of which were alight.

On reaching them, he inquired from what country they came. They

[1] This may mean simply that Oviedo was misinformed on the course of this voyage. But more probably his "Brazil" is the mythical Island of Brazil in western waters, and his "Tierra Firme" is the mainland of North America.

answered they were Englishmen from the city of London, and that the vessel belonged to the king of England. He asked them what they had come to look for in those parts. They told him the king had fitted out that vessel and another to go and discover the land of the Great Khan, but that on the way, they met with a storm, during which they lost sight of their consort and had never seen her again. They held on their course and reached the frozen sea where they met large islands of ice. Being unable to pass that way, they altered their course but ran into a sea as hot as water in a boiler. For fear lest the water should melt the pitch of their vessel, they turned about and came to explore Newfoundland, where they found some 50 Spanish, French and Portuguese fishing-vessels. They desired to land there in order to have tidings of the Indians, but on reaching the shore the Indians killed the pilot, who they said was a Piedmontese by birth. Setting sail thence they made their way for some 400 leagues and more along the coast of the new land where Ayllon took his colony. Thence they crossed over and came to explore the island of St. John.

He asked them what they were looking for in these islands. They answered that they wished to examine them in order to give the king of England an account thereof; when they had explored them, they would take a load of Brazil-wood and return home. They inquired for the course to Santo Domingo and about the harbour there, and who was in charge of the island, as they wished to go and examine it. He told them everything and they made a note of the same.

The captain of the English ship invited Gines Navarro to come on board; which he did and was shown all over it. She had only wine, flour and provisions, with some clothes, linen goods and other articles for barter, and much good artillery. There were also carpenters, smiths and a forge, other artisans, tools to build more vessels in case of necessity and an oven for baking bread. The whole ship's company that he saw would number as many as 70 people. He states that the captain asked him if he could read Latin or Spanish: for he wished to show him the orders which he brought from the king of England. Since he was unable to read, he did not see them.

The captain and some 25 or 30 men went ashore at Mona and remained there until Wednesday afternoon. All came armed. They went on board for Santo Domingo, and on Thursday morning shot off two lombards and blew a trumpet and set sail in the direction of Santo Domingo, until they were out of sight.

The said Gines Navarro remained at Mona until Friday, when he came to this island.

This copy was taken from the original that was sent to the royal Audiencia of St. John's island, which was obtained from the captain of a caravel that lay at Mona island when the English ship passed by on her way to this harbour of Santo Domingo: Diego Cavallo.

Endorsed: Madrid, 11 March, 1528.

Original Spanish, with translation, printed in *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier*, by H. P. Biggar, pp. 165–8.

First printed in 1882.

NO. 79. THE ENGLISH SHIP AT SANTO DOMINGO, 1527

From the Archivo de Indias at Seville.

[Depositions taken at Santo Domingo, Nov. 26, etc., 1527.] In the city of Santo Domingo, Tuesday, the twenty-sixth day of the month of November in the year one thousand five hundred and twenty-seven, the Licentiates Cristóbal Lebron and Alonso Zuazo, judges of his majesty's High Court of Justice and Equity, being assembled in the House of Trade, I, Diego Caballero, secretary of the said Royal Audiencia, being present, their honours stated that:

Whereas yesterday, Monday, in the afternoon, there arrived off the mouth of this river and port a large three-masted ship belonging to the king of England; and its master with ten or twelve seamen came ashore in a boat, and told them that the ship belonged to the king of England; and that this ship, together with another, cleared perhaps nine months ago from England at the command of their king, to make a certain exploration towards the north, between Labrador[1] and Newfoundland, in the belief that in that region there was a strait through which to pass to Tartary; and that they had sailed as far north as fifty and some degrees where certain persons died of cold, the pilot had died, and one of the said vessels was lost; for which reasons they came to this land to take in water and subsistence and other things which they needed.

And they asked for safe-conduct to enter this port, which their honours extended to them in his majesty's name, sending with them to the ship Diego Mendez, high sheriff of this island, and Antonio Martin and Pedro Montiel, pilots, to bring the said ship into this harbour; who, since it was almost dark yesterday, could not bring her in until to-day, the date aforesaid, at ten o'clock in the morning, when the ship anchored at the mouth

[1] "Labrador" probably means Greenland.

of the river, in order to be warped up thence, since the north wind was blowing.

And whereas, the ship being so anchored, they have been informed and it is notorious, that from the fortress of this city there was fired at them a small lombard loaded with a stone, which passed close to the said ship; which for this reason at once cleared on a course towards Castile.

And whereas they desire to take evidence in the matter, in order to act as justice may demand; therefore they administered the oath to the said Antonio Martin and Pedro Montiel, pilots, who swore in legal form and deposed as follows:

The said Antonio Martin, pilot, resident in this city, stated that yesterday, Monday, in the afternoon, by order of the judges, he and another pilot, accompanying the high sheriff, went with the master of the English ship to the said ship, which was off the entrance of this harbour and unable to sail in because of the north wind, which was blowing and continues to blow.

They boarded the said ship, where the master received them very well, and gave them to eat and drink very well indeed, and showed them certain linens, woollens and other merchandise which he carried for barter.

And just when they had dropped anchor and, the ship being anchored, all hands had begun to eat with much pleasure and good humour, from the fortress of this city a lombard was fired, and the stone passed by the poop of the ship very near to it; whereupon the ship's master turned colour, saying to witness and his companion that it was a plot to betray them.

Deponent tried to quiet and reassure him as best he could, telling him that the lombard which had been fired was a salute in welcome; the master wanted to know why, then, it had been loaded.

In fine, deponent could not prevent them from raising anchor and at once making sail.

Deponent and the other pilot put off in a small boat which they had taken out; and when, in the small boat, they passed near the fortress where was the warden, Francisco de Tapia, Alonso Davila being with him, deponent asked the warden if he thought he had acted wisely, inasmuch as the ship was departing because of the lombard he had fired; and the warden replied that the judges had advised him of nothing, for which reason he had fired.

And now deponent observes that the ship has gone, on a course for Castile, its departure having been occasioned by the lombard shot which the warden fired, according as he has deposed, to which he was an eye-witness.

This is the truth, on the oath administered to him; and he said that he does not know how to write.

A number of further depositions follow, but contain no additional information on the English ship's voyage except the following:

[Deposition of Alonso Davila.] Witness deposed that what he knows of the matter set forth is that when the master of the said ship was ashore witness heard him say that that ship and another, which sailed in her company and had been lost, had cleared by order of the king of England, to seek a passage towards the north; and for lack of their pilot, who had been killed in a land whereon they had touched, they had come to this island for information concerning the course back to their own land. From what witness has heard said by men skilled in navigation, witness is certain that the ship could have returned to England from where the master said she was, more easily than she came to this island; and according to the course she laid to come to this port, witness believes she carried aboard some persons who knew well how to steer her.

[Deposition of Diego Martel.] Witness deposed . . . that on the night the two seamen passed in his house, wishing to know more of their arrival, witness asked them how they came to come up to this port, when the place whence they came was a better situation from which to return to their land, rather than come here; and these men answered witness that the King of England had sent them out with two ships to discover a certain strait which was towards Noruega, whence they had cleared, and because they sailed far enough north to reach sixty-four degrees, since it was winter, they found all the land frozen, and it was so cold that four or five of the crew had died of it. Therefore they had decided to come to a warmer country, and to this cause, and because their pilot had been killed, was their arrival due, and also to their intent to sell certain merchandise, cloth and linen, which the ship carried, and to take on a man skilled in navigation to carry them back to England. This is what the said two men told witness, and witness is certain that the ship could not have arrived at this port had there not been a man aboard who knew the course, to bring her to the said port.

[Deposition of Francisco Merchant, who saw the English ship at Ocoa, eighteen leagues from Santo Domingo.] Three or four days later [i.e. after the ship had quitted Santo Domingo] the ship reappeared there [at Ocoa] and put off a boat with thirty or so men, armed with bows and arrows and swords and targets, and the boat was well supplied with firearms and a big cannon. As soon as they had landed they went to Licentiate Zuazo's

estate and inquired if meat was to be had there for their money, and when they were told that there was not, they took all the hens and capons and chickens they could, and more than four hundred eggs, and all the clothing belonging to the Indians and negroes, and certain loads of *cazabe*. Thence they went down to the river to a hut belonging to Francisco Medel, fisherman, and there took as many as a hundred and fifty *arrobas* of fish (a little more), and stripped witness of what clothing he had on and off his person, and carried it away with them. From there they went to Alexos Miguel's farm and carried off all the hens they could, and the farmer's clothing, to the point of leaving him in his shirt.

They made threats against everybody in this city, and against the city itself, saying that they would assemble as many as six ships and come to this island, and that their sole purpose now was to become acquainted with its ports against their return. They said to witness: "Tell these Indian dogs that they shall pay!" Especially one of them, who put his finger on his forehead, saying: "By my head, they'll pay for it".

From *Spanish Documents concerning English Voyages in the Caribbean, 1527–1568*, by I. A. Wright, Hakluyt Society, 1929, by kind permission of Miss Wright and the Council of the Hakluyt Society.

First printed in 1929.

NO. 80. HAKLUYT'S ACCOUNT OF THE VOYAGE OF 1536

From Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (Maclehose edition), vol. VIII, pp. 3–7.

The voyage of M. Hore and divers other gentlemen, to Newfoundland, and Cape Briton, in the yere 1536 and in the 28 yere of king Henry the 8.

One master Hore of London, a man of goodly stature and of great courage, and given to the studie of Cosmographie, in the 28 yere of king Henry the 8 and in the yere of our Lord 1536 encouraged divers Gentlemen and others, being assisted by the kings favour and good countenance, to accompany him in a voyage of discoverie upon the Northwest parts of America: wherein his perswasions tooke such effect, that within short space many gentlemen of the Innes of court, and of the Chancerie, and divers others of good worship, desirous to see the strange things of the world, very willingly entred into the action with him, some of whose names were as followeth: M. Weekes a gentleman of the West countrey of five hundred markes by the yeere living. M. Tucke a gentleman of Kent. M. Tuckfield. M. Thomas Buts the sonne of Sir William Buts knight, of Norfolke, which was lately living, and from whose mouth I wrote most of this relation. M. Hardie, M. Biron, M. Carter, M. Wright, M. Rastall Serjeant Rastals brother, M. Ridley, and divers other, which all were in the Admyrall called the Trinitie, a ship of seven score tunnes, wherein M. Hore himselfe was imbarked. In the other ship whose name was the Minion, went a very learned and vertuous gentleman one M. Armigil Wade, Afterwardes Clerke of the Counsailes of king Henry the 8 and king Edward the sixth, father to the worshipfull M. William Wade now Clerke of the privie Counsell, M. Oliver Dawbeney marchant of London, M. Joy afterward gentleman of the Kings Chappel, with divers other of good account. The whole number that went in the two tall ships aforesaid, to wit, the Trinitie and the Minion, were about sixe score persons, whereof thirty were gentlemen, which all were mustered in warlike maner at Graves-end, and after the receiving of the Sacrament, they embarked themselves in the ende of Aprill. 1536.

From the time of their setting out from Gravesend, they were very long at sea, to witte, above two moneths, and never touched any land untill they came to part of the West Indies about Cape Briton, shaping their course thence Northeastwardes untill they came to the Island of Penguin, which is very full of rockes and stones, whereon they went and found it

full of great foules white and gray, as big as geese, and they saw infinite numbers of their egges. They drave a great number of the foules into their boates upon their sayles, and tooke up many of their egges, the foules they flead and their skinnes were very like hony combes full of holes being flead off: they dressed and eate them and found them to be very good and nourishing meat. They saw also store of beares both blacke and white, of whome they killed some, and tooke them for no bad foode.

M. Oliver Dawbeny, which (as it is before mentioned) was in this voyage, and in the Minion, told M. Richard Hakluyt of the middle Temple these things following: to wit, That after their arrivall in Newfoundland, and having bene there certaine dayes at ancre, and not having yet seene any of the naturall people of the countrey, the same Dawbeney walking one day on the hatches, spied a boate with Savages of those parts, rowing downe the Bay toward them, to gaze upon the ship and our people, and taking vewe of their comming aloofe, hee called to such as were under the hatches, and willed them to come up if they would see the natural people of the countrey, that they had so long and so much desired to see: whereupon they came up, and tooke viewe of the Savages rowing toward them and their ship, and upon the viewe they manned out a ship-boat to meet them and to take them. But they spying our ship-boat making towards them, returned with maine force and fled into an Island that lay up in the Bay or river there, and our men pursued them into the Island, and the Savages fledde and escaped: but our men found a fire, and the side of a beare on a wooden spit left at the same by the Savages that were fled.

There in the same place they found a boote of leather garnished on the outward side of the calfe with certaine brave trailes, as it were of rawe silke, and also found a certaine great warme mitten: And these caryed with them, they returned to their shippe, not finding the Savages, nor seeing any thing else besides the soyle, and the things growing in the same, which chiefly were store of firre and pine trees.

And further, the said M. Dawbeny told him, that lying there they grew into great want of victuals, and that there they found small reliefe, more then that they had from the nest of an Osprey, that brought hourely to her yong great plentie of divers sorts of fishes. But such was the famine that increased amongst them from day to day, that they were forced to seeke to relieve themselves of raw herbes and rootes that they sought on the maine: but the famine increasing, and the reliefe of herbes being to little purpose to satisfie their insatiable hunger, in the fields and deserts here and there, the fellowe killed his mate while he stooped to take up a

roote for his reliefe, and cutting out pieces of his bodie whom he had murthered, broyled the same on the coles and greedily devoured them.

By this meane the company decreased, and the officers knew not what was become of them; And it fortuned that one of the company driven with hunger to seeke abroade for reliefe found out in the fieldes the savour of broyled flesh, and fell out with one for that he would suffer him and his fellowes to sterve, enjoying plentie as he thought: and this matter growing to cruell speaches, he that had the broyled meate, burst out into these wordes: If thou wouldest needes know, the broyled meate that I had was a piece of such a mans buttocke. The report of this brought to the ship, the Captaine found what became of those that were missing, & was perswaded that some of them were neither devoured with wilde beastes, nor yet destroyed with Savages: And hereupon hee stood up and made a notable Oration, containing, Howe much these dealings offended the Almightie, and vouched the Scriptures from first to last, what God had in cases of distresse done for them that called upon him, and told them that the power of the Almighty was then no lesse, then in al former time it had bene. And added, that if it had not pleased God to have holpen them in that distresse, that it had bene better to have perished in body, and to have lived everlastingly, then to have relieved for a poore time their mortal bodyes, and to bee condemned everlastingly both body and soule to the unquenchable fire of hell. And thus having ended to that effect, he began to exhort to repentance, and besought all the company to pray, that it might please God to looke upon their miserable present state, and for his owne mercie to relieve the same. The famine increasing, and the inconvenience of the men that were missing being found, they agreed amongst themselves rather then all should perish, to cast lots who should be killed: And such was the mercie of God, that the same night there arrived a French ship in that port, well furnished with vittaile, and such was the policie of the English, that they became masters of the same, and changing ships and vittailing them, they set sayle to come into England.

In their journey they were so farre Northwards, that they sawe mighty Islands of yce in the sommer season, on which were haukes and other foules to rest themselves being weary of flying over farre from the maine. They sawe also certaine great white foules with red bils and red legs, somewhat bigger then Herons, which they supposed to be Storkes. They arrived at St. Ives in Cornewall about the ende of October. From thence they departed unto a certaine castle belonging to sir John Luttrell, where

M. Thomas Buts, and M. Rastall and other Gentlemen of the voyage were very friendly entertained: after that they came to the Earle of Bathe at Bathe, and thence to Bristoll, so to London, M. Buts was so changed in the voyage with hunger and miserie, that sir William his father and my Lady his mother knew him not to be their sonne, untill they found a secret marke which was a wart upon one of his knees, as hee told me Richard Hakluyt of Oxford himselfe, to whom I rode 200. miles onely to learne the whole trueth of this voyage from his own mouth, as being the onely man now alive that was in this discoverie.

Certaine moneths after, those Frenchmen came into England, and made complaint to king Henry the 8: the king causing the matter to be examined, and finding the great distresse of his subjects, and the causes of the dealing so with the French, was so mooved with pitie, that he punished not his subjects, but of his owne purse made full and royall recompence unto the French.

In this distresse of famine, the English did somewhat relieve their vitall spirits, by drinking at the springs the fresh water out of certaine wooden cups, out of which they had drunk their Aqua composita before.

NO. 81. ANDRÉ THEVET'S ACCOUNT OF AN ENGLISH VOYAGE UNDER HENRY VII OR VIII

From *La Cosmographie Universelle*, by André Thevet, Paris, 1575, vol. II, f. 1022.

...Baccaleos, which by its appearance you would liken to the four fingers of a man extended with the hand open; and the isle of Fiche, which adjoins it springing from the northern side; and it is in these places that they have good fishing. Some eight leagues from there, reckoning always from the north, appears a great land called the land of Corte Real, discovered in the year 1501 by a captain named Gaspar Corte Real, a Portuguese; although it had been visited fourteen years before by certain captains of Rochelle, in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Merosre, who went fairly deep into the said gulf. And it is in that place that the pilot of King Henry of England, with a good number of ships, thought to have found a strait to pass into the Pacific Ocean. But being in the latitude of fifty-nine degrees, having coasted these regions for a long time, not without great difficulty on account of the continual cold, he found himself balked of his enterprise, and came to touch at the Isle of Caravelle, where he almost lost his life because of the breakers, rocks and perils that are there. Passing beyond he entered the river named of Torment for some ten or

twelve leagues; where, perceiving the narrowing of the said river and the freshness of the water, he was compelled to turn about, as otherwise he would have been in greater danger than ever. And in this manner they plyed in this gulf for two whole months and were obliged to withdraw from it.

PART II

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH EXPEDITIONS TO NORTH AMERICA UNDER HENRY VII & HENRY VIII

CHAPTER I

THE ATLANTIC PROBLEM OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

THE effective discoveries of America and of the maritime passage to Asia, the discoveries which ushered in the modern period of world history by creating in turn colonial empires, oceanic trade, accumulations of capital, and the industrial revolution, were achieved by the men who dwelt on the Atlantic coastline of Christendom. These men, Portuguese, Spaniards, English, and French, performed with their own wits and muscles nearly all the work of discovery, although in the first generation they owed much to the leadership of a handful of brilliant Italians, and for a century and more their efforts were backed by the academic thought of that advanced strip of central Europe which ran down from the North Sea through the Rhineland across the Alps to Rome. There were several lines of mental and material progress that converged to bring this maritime achievement to fruition in the late fifteenth century, and it is the purpose of this chapter to survey them briefly in turn and to show how they reacted upon one another.

The barbarian irruptions which overthrew the western Roman Empire almost obliterated in western Christendom that knowledge of world geography which the Roman civilization had acquired. For five centuries western Europe was confined much within itself, struggling hard to maintain its remnant of Christian culture against pagans from the north and Moslems from the south, and submitting to the blight of feudal tyranny as the only alternative to extinction. It was not a time conducive to mental progress, and what thought survived was predominantly religious, of the narrow kind that dealt more with the future life than with the wretched world around. In the Eastern Empire there was no cataclysmal breach with the ancient culture, but there also a steady decline took place. Constantinople survived, but its provinces had withered, and many had been lopped off. As in the west, religion dominated thought, and the geography of the ancient world lay neglected in the libraries, or was assimilated only by the Saracen pioneers who had at their backs the wide sweep of the Indian Ocean wherein speculation and practice could combine. For eastern Christendom, as for western, it was a time of closing rather than expanding frontiers, and geographical lore was at a discount. Consequently, although trade still survived in the Mediterranean, and even in the darkest hour men sailed from Marseilles or Venice to

Byzantium, the west as yet drew no stimulus from the buried learning of the east.

With the stemming of the Moslem onrush and with the conversion and absorption of the Vikings the tide turned in the west, and in the tenth and eleventh centuries the Dark Age gave place to the Middle Ages. Trade revived, a centralized Church permeated Europe with its emissaries, and pilgrimage induced habits of travel among many who might otherwise have stayed at home. Next, the Crusades helped to restore the Mediterranean as an international highway, and brought statesmen and merchants into touch with educated Saracens who had themselves acquired some of the learning of the classical world and were in contact with the Asiatic mysteries beyond the Black Sea and the Syrian desert. The Saracens of the Levant, less fortunate than their brethren of Barbary and Spain, were now declining before the power of the warlike Turks, Mongols who had entered the Moslem world as mercenaries, and who adopted its religion and rose to be its masters. It was this circumstance that led to the first practical extension of geographical knowledge in mediaeval Europe. The Turkish advance was a threat to Christendom, and in the thirteenth century Rome despatched emissaries by land into Central Asia to seek alliance with the non-Moslem Mongols who were building a mighty empire in Cathay. The friars John de Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck successively penetrated Mongolia and returned to tell what they had seen. In the latter half of the century Marco Polo and his relatives traversed Asia from end to end, and others followed them by different routes. Mediaeval land travel, by stimulating trade and mental speculation, helped to revive the practical geographical learning of the ancient world.

It was not until the same thirteenth century that the theoretical side of that knowledge began to recover the ground lost in the Dark Age. Ecclesiastical influence had a retarding effect. A narrow interpretation of the scriptures discouraged the classical concept of the earth as a sphere, without which no great scientific advance was possible. Cosmas, about A.D. 550, drew diagrams to illustrate the theory of a flat earth. Monkish geographers began early to draw world-maps, with the three continents cramped and distorted within an encircling rim of ocean, beyond which lay a void. Such maps were mere products of the study. Their purpose was to visualize holy writ, and their outstanding feature was often a picture of Adam and Eve in a paradise whence flowed the sacred rivers. Real lands and places were subordinate, and coastlines were fantastic. These world-maps were of no help to land travellers, and they were an active discouragement to ocean venturing, since they promised no farther

shore, nothing but catastrophe to any who should push boldly out from the European coast. In fact the early explorer by land did not use maps or think in terms of maps; he asked his way. Even Marco Polo does not always record measured distances or systematically lay down exact bearings. His itinerary has been traced by the light of after-knowledge, but it would puzzle any man to make a passable map of Asia by his indications alone. Marco Polo, however, was more than a land traveller. He returned by sea from China round the southern shores of Asia to the Persian Gulf. That should have been a stimulus to maritime exploration, for a similar coasting of Africa would have filled in the whole track from Europe to the Far East. But in fact no such stimulus resulted. European shipping was too rudimentary, and preconceptions about the impossibility of human beings surviving the passage of the torrid zone stood in the way. By the time it had become practicable to think of circumnavigating Africa the classical revival had advanced further, and the possibility of crossing and not merely coasting the ocean had presented itself.

The flat-earth theory, although accepted by some, never gained a firm hold upon geographical thought. Even so early as the eighth century Bede held that the earth was spherical, and in the thirteenth century Bacon and other schoolmen were teaching that doctrine with elaboration. Nevertheless, the error continued into the fifteenth century to influence the appearance of the maps. Although their makers knew they were drawing a spherical surface they depicted only a hemisphere with the three continents surrounded by an ocean ring. It was thus very easy for the unlearned who saw these maps to believe that the earth was flat, and very difficult for them to compass the idea of sailing from western Europe round the reverse of the sphere to eastern Asia. And again there were some who, whilst accepting the sphere, believed that the known continents occupied its only habitable surface, and that any who ventured to the other (assumed to be the under) side would fall off. Two lines of advance helped to spread the truth and bring the knowledge of the schools to the minds of sailors and shipowners: learning became more widely disseminated, and practical men began to ponder the mystery of the Atlantic and to make experimental voyages on its waters.

The fifteenth century was the period of the effective emergence of the classical geography into the general thought of Europe. The scholarly mind relinquished its isolation and shared its conclusions with men of affairs. The Burgundian court, wealthy and brilliant beyond previous example, patronized all kinds of art and learning. The merchant-princes and tyrants of northern Italy were equally enlightened. Prince Henry of

Portugal, the patron of navigators, attracted learned men and their writings to his remote sea-coast, where he transmuted thought into achievement. A book written about 1410, the *Imago Mundi* of Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly, had great influence throughout the century. It was hardly an original treatise, but it popularized knowledge that had stood waiting in the background. The *Imago Mundi* is the picture of the spherical earth familiar to Roger Bacon, and its author quotes Aristotle and Seneca to prove that by crossing the Atlantic westwards from Europe the east of Asia may be reached—nay more, it may be reached in a few days, "provided the wind be favourable".[1] The *Imago Mundi* had a vogue long after its author's death. About 1487 it came into print, and Columbus had a copy which he read and re-read and scribbled with marginal notes. Perhaps John Cabot had one also; at least he was an exponent of its teaching. The treatise of Claudius Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer of the second century, attained the like prominence. It had never been entirely lost to view, although it was for long known only through Saracen paraphrases. But the ecclesiastics of the early Middle Ages had found it distasteful to their mode of thought, and the schoolmen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whilst recognizing its validity, had never sought to apply it to any but abstract uses. The age of Cardinal d'Ailly took up the Ptolemaic geography with enthusiasm, and its world-maps, imperfect as they were, soon ousted the circular presentations of the earlier time. Ptolemy's treatise and atlas were copied in numerous fifteenth-century manuscripts and became a favourite subject with the early printers. The result was that academic thought converged upon everyday thought and the way was prepared for that marriage of scholarship with seamanship which ushered in the great age of discovery.

Meanwhile unlettered seamanship had been doing preliminary work. The sailors of the Atlantic coast, to all appearance innocent of spherical geography and visions of Cathay, had pushed out into unknown waters before the fourteenth century. These Atlantic men were for the most part Portuguese, but there were Italians of their number, for Italian merchantmen were regularly passing the Straits of Gibraltar and sailing north to Lisbon and Southampton and Flanders. The Germans also of the Hanseatic League were trading southwards to Lisbon and Seville, but the records of discovery are silent upon any achievement of theirs. As early as 1270, by one account, a Genoese expedition found the Canary Islands, but the success was not followed up, and the effective discovery which brought the islands permanently into history was made by the Portuguese (with

[1] See above, Document No. 3, the Eighth Chapter of *Imago Mundi*.

Italian pilotage) in 1341. Half a century later the French of Normandy made the effort which resulted in the conquest of the aborigines and the planting of a European colony; but the fruits of the enterprise fell to the crown of Portugal, and ultimately to that of Spain. The Normans indeed are alleged to have gone farther afield. It is claimed that they reached the Gold Coast and made settlements there before the fourteenth century was out. But that story is highly suspect and probably rests on forged evidence. The same may be said of the alleged discovery of Madeira by an Englishman in 1370. Better substantiated is the finding of some of the Azores by the Portuguese in 1351. As with the Canaries, this incident was forgotten, and the Azores had to wait for effective discovery and colonization until 1431.

These firstfruits of exploration were the result of empirical methods. There was no scientific conception behind them. Men were blown out of their reckoning and blundered on strange coasts. Others saw clouds and reported them as islands, and others in turn were tempted to sail farther west in the search. The real islands found revived a whole series of myths and legends lurking in folk-memory, and in the fourteenth century the circular world-maps began to enlarge the ocean rim surrounding the three continents and to besprinkle it liberally with brightly coloured little lands with entrancing names and legends attached. Thus, long before these master-mariners had heard of Ptolemy or the *Imago Mundi* they were regarding the Atlantic as a field of discovery. But then and long afterwards the common mind ran upon islands, not continents. "Unknown islands" were the words of magic. There was yet no thought of voyaging to India and the Empire of Cathay.

It was just as well, for the means were yet inadequate, although they were steadily improving by the practice of European trade. Here the Mediterranean men bear the palm of achievement. Whilst the scholars were imagining vain things and drawing world-maps hinged upon Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden, the sea-traders were evolving charts. In the busy Mediterranean their commerce had become so highly organized, with wide-spreading companies and branch establishments, banks and capital and bills of exchange, that the instruments of transit had brains and experience applied to their improvement. Before the dawn of the fourteenth century the portolan map existed, a real navigator's chart, a very different thing from the monkish caricature. Who evolved it no one knows, whether Italians or Byzantines or Catalans from Barcelona. But by 1300, as surviving examples show, a standard type had been established, a coast-outline of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea so faithfully drawn

that a tracing which omits certain contemporary adjuncts may easily be mistaken for a tracing from a modern atlas. With this portolan a man might navigate with certainty, by science and not by instinct. For a century and more its scope was limited to the well-known waters of the Mediterranean and the ocean coasts adjoining Gibraltar; but its possibilities of world extension were implicit, and the mentality that made and used it was a significant thing. The man of action was educating himself, not in the school of Ptolemy, but in that of experience.

Behind the portolan, and necessary to its use, lay the magnetic compass, whose adoption was general in the thirteenth century. Not long afterwards there evolved a simplified astrolabe and other instruments for measuring the altitude of heavenly bodies at sea. These may not have been prominent in Mediterranean navigation, which was largely a matter of dead reckoning and knowledge of coastlines, but they became indispensable to those who made open-water passages to the Atlantic islands. Effective ocean discovery, however, would hardly have been possible without another improvement, that of the ships themselves. Mediaeval shipping fell into two classes, the galley or oared craft, swift but fragile, and of limited range owing to the large crews required; and the nef or round-ship, capacious and seaworthy, but driven by a single square sail and needing a following wind. Galleys were uneconomic and unsafe without a shelter to run to in bad weather. Long ocean voyages were hardly practicable with them. In the round-ships men sailed north to the Iceland fishery and southward to the Canaries, but at terrible risk, for with the wind in sixteen points out of the thirty-two progress was impossible, and the end must often have been total loss of reckoning and death by hunger. Yet the risk was faced and the consequent death-rate accepted. Still, there was a limit to fortitude, and we can well believe that it would have been reached before men would habitually have undertaken voyages to the West Indies or the Guinea coast in such vessels. The progressive fifteenth century made the needed improvement. The three-masted ship came into being, with a weatherly hull and a combination of sails, and just as theoretical science was ready to reveal the ocean the shipping was also ready with which to master the discovery.

The Portuguese, it is sometimes forgotten, were the pioneers in the westward exploration of the Atlantic, as they were in the southward search of the African coast.[1] The Spaniards were much less active, although

[1] The reference is to effective discovery. There are records of earlier pioneers extending back to Hanno the Carthaginian, but their results were not incorporated into systematic knowledge.

they had the good fortune in the end to achieve a share of the spoil out of all proportion to their previous efforts. Portuguese speculations, it would appear, even late in the fifteenth century, took very little account of the revelation of a passage to Asia by the west. They were based on the discoveries, already achieved, of island groups in the Atlantic, and upon a number of traditions which indicated that more remained to be found. The most lively and promising of these traditions was that of the Seven Cities. Seven refugee bishops, it was said, had fled by sea from the Saracen conquest of Spain in the eighth century. They had taken ship with their followers and sailed to a large island in the west where they had founded seven distinct settlements in which their descendants were maintaining a Christian civilization entirely cut off from Europe. On arrival at the island they had burnt their shipping to prevent the faint-hearted from turning back, and it was suspected that after the lapse of several centuries these communities had no wish to resume contact with the European world. There was a story that some time before 1460 a Portuguese ship had been driven by a storm to the island. The crew had landed and worshipped in a Christian church, and had been invited to interview the lord of the country. But they suspected a design of the inhabitants to fire their vessel and detain them, and hurriedly made sail and returned to Portugal; and they were so scared that they refused to make another voyage in prosecution of the discovery.[1] The Seven Cities were nearly always located on the island of Antilia, which usually appears as the largest of all the traditionary lands in the Atlantic. It is shown in the map of Andreas Bianca of 1436, oblong in shape, about one-third the area of Portugal, and with the seven harbours indenting the coastline. This map places Antilia some seven hundred miles west of Lisbon, and is further interesting as showing the corner of yet another land north by west of Antilia. It is inscribed "Isla de la man satanaxio" and perhaps represents some vestige of an early sighting of North America. More probably both Satanaxio and Antilia were really hazy reports of the Azores, and when the Azores were certainly discovered the identification was not accepted, but the legendary lands were pushed still farther out to the west. A map of 1463 and another of 1482 actually give the names of the seven cities of Antilia.[2]

Another widespread tradition was that of the island of Brasil, where it was supposed that valuable dye-woods were produced. Brasil is generally

[1] No. 4, The extract from Las Casas.

[2] Kretschmer, noted below, Plate VI, gives the map of 1482; that of 1463 is reproduced in J. G. Kohl's *Report upon the U.S. Geographical Surveys*, Washington, 1889, Vol. I.

shown as a small island about the size of Madeira. It is located sometimes west of Portugal and sometimes west of Ireland. A Genoese map of 1455 indeed marks two "Islands of Brasil", one in each position. Spaniards and Portuguese who traded with the Irish ports were convinced that there was a land not very far to the westward, and two old sailors independently told Columbus about it.[1] The Bristol men also believed in this Brasil in their latitude, as will appear from their adventure of 1480 to be narrated below.

An ecclesiastical legend gave rise to reports of yet another archipelago, the Fortunate Islands of Saint Brandan. The basis of the belief was that Brandan, an Irish saint of the Dark Age, had embarked on a cruise in which he had visited various islands and had settled as a hermit on one of them. His actual route, if he ever made the journey, must have been to the northward, and his islands were most likely the Hebrides, Shetlands, Faroes, and perhaps Iceland. For one of his experiences was the sight of Judas Iscariot cooling himself on an iceberg on his annual day's leave from hell; and there is evidence that the Norse pioneers who colonized Iceland found Celts already in possession. The Latin seamen adopted St Brandan's story and shifted his islands to the southward. They appear in maps of the fifteenth century in latitudes ranging from that of Portugal down almost to the equator. Numerous single islands are also marked upon the maps with names which recur but have left no special traditions attached to them. They include, with variations of spelling, those of St George, Colombi, Spirito Sancto, Lovo, Capraria, and "Islands of the Savages", and they form a line of imaginary outposts in the Atlantic intermingled with the genuine Azores, Madeira and Canaries.[2]

When once speculation had been excited in the Atlantic and shipping had grown adequate to the task of ocean voyaging, the interest in the matter cumulatively increased. Some large discovery would certainly have been accomplished early in the sixteenth century had Columbus and

[1] No. 4 (Las Casas).

[2] On this subject the following maps may be compared: Mecia de Viladestes (late 14th cent.), and Soleri (1385), in *Choix de Cartes et de Mappemondes*, by Gabriel Marcel, Paris, 1896; portolan of c. 1400 in the Visconde de Santarem's *Atlas*, Paris, 1842, etc., ff. 42, 45; Gratioso Benincasa of Ancona (1471), *ibid.*, f. 71; Andreas Bianca (1436) in Konrad Kretschmer's *Die Entdeckung Amerika's*, Berlin, 1892, Plate IV; Bartolomeo Pareto (1458), *ibid.*, Plate V; and Martin Behaim's Globe, 1492, various reproductions available, including Kretschmer, *op. cit.*, Plate VI. A reproduction of the Behaim globe is to be seen in the Library of the Royal Geographical Society.

The Atlantic Islands as shown in the Map of Andreas Bianca, 1436.

Cabot never been born. For all the time the unknown world was sending out signals of its existence, silent calls for investigation which needed only the notice of a generation with minds to respond. Shipmasters in the lonely waters picked up pieces of timber, curiously wrought with tools that were not of iron. They found great canes floating, whose cavities would hold "three measures of wine". Dead bodies came ashore in the islands, with broad countenances and other signs that they were not of Europeans. Dug-out canoes even drifted in from the mysterious horizon, and when the north-westerly gales roared over the Azores in winter they brought great pine trunks such as western Europe could not grow. Year by year the tale mounted until Antilia and St Brandan's and Brasil became obsessions with every mariner whose business took him west of Cape Clear and Finisterre. Of America as we know it there is no hint of a suspicion. The traditional geography of the three continents was the background of all minds, and the unknown lands were merely islands, large or small but increasingly desirable. Neither do India and Cathay figure prominently, if at all, in these sailors' imaginings. It is evident that the new geography familiar in the schools since Bacon's time had as yet made little impression on their minds.[1]

The Portuguese seamen were not content with reporting these proofs of islands. They saw, or thought they saw, the islands themselves. The colonists of Madeira and the Azores were especially vehement with circumstantial tales of discovery which moved investors to finance expeditions and the Crown of Portugal to grant patents for conquest and exploration.[2]

For at least three hundred years Englishmen had been trading with Portugal, and they had also commercial relations with the Atlantic islands before the fifteenth century was out. The point of contact, so far as can be proved, was at Bristol. Adventurers from the Azores resorted thither when their projects took them to England in 1501, and men bearing the same names, although not positively indentifiable as the same persons, are traceable there several years earlier. In the reign of Edward IV the Bristol customs ledgers contain entries of English and Portuguese ships

[1] It was formerly believed that Affonso V of Portugal received a detailed explanation of the Cathay project in 1474 from the Florentine savant Paolo Toscanelli. But the late Henry Vignaud has given good reasons for thinking that the Toscanelli letter was spurious and concocted at a later date. See Vignaud's *Toscanelli and Columbus*, London, 1902, *passim*.

[2] See No. 5, Patents granted in 1462, etc. Cf. also, H. Harrisse, *Discovery of North America*, London, 1892, pp. 51–2, for details of other expeditions.

sailing "versus partes exteras".[1] It is an uncommon phraseology, for the destinations are in all other cases exactly specified, and it may represent a voyage to the Azores or some other region whose name was unfamiliar to the customs clerk. More certain are two entries of 1480 and 1486.[2] The first is of a Breton ship which sailed for Madeira with cargo owned by certain Bristol merchants. By the practice of the time the merchant either went in person with his goods or sent one of his servants to sell them, and the record is reasonable proof that some Englishmen reached Madeira in 1480. We have already seen what tales they may have picked up there. The other entry is of a ship "the Mare Petat in which Lusianus is master" —presumably Portuguese—which arrived from Madeira with a lading of sugar and bowstaves. The shippers were foreigners and included "Gunsalus" and "ffornandus", names which will recur in our story at a later date. In the fifteenth century Bristol was the chief centre of English trade with Portugal, just as Southampton was the headquarters of that with Venice and Genoa, and it is significant that Bristol and not Southampton became the seat of English exploring enterprise. Had the Italians been the source of the inspiration the parts played by the two towns might have been reversed.

Bristol had also a regular connexion with a quite different storehouse of geographical information. The extracts printed above from the Icelandic sagas[3] illustrate the successive discoveries of Helluland, Markland and Vinland in the late tenth century, by voyagers who set out from the Norse colony in Greenland. Few persons have now any doubt that these records prove a Norse discovery of America, although the identification of the regions visited has been a matter of controversy. That is a question not to our present purpose. What is important is that the existence of western lands was known to the Greenlanders and Icelanders. There are traces of further voyages to America in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1347, to specify the latest record, a ship arrived in Iceland from Markland having suffered by stress of weather, and her plight caused the incident to be noted in the Icelandic Annals. An investigator of these stories remarks: "Probably no very unique enterprise is here chronicled".[4] The Greenland colony was maintained into the fifteenth century, and the lore of the western voyages continued to be a living subject in Iceland.

[1] E. 122, 19/4 (1466, Feb. 15 and 28). The cargoes give the impression that these were trading voyages, not voyages of exploration.

[2] No. 6, Bristol trade with Madeira.

[3] No. 1, Norse Voyages to America.

[4] G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Norse Discoverers of America*, Oxford, 1921, p. 283.

The manuscripts from which modern translations of the sagas are drawn are copies made in that country from older versions. The Flatey Book, the most voluminous of these manuscripts, was compiled between 1370 and 1387. Hauk's Book is rather older, of the period 1299–1334. The Saga of Eric the Red is not precisely datable, but is judged to be a manuscript copied in Iceland in the early fifteenth century.[1] An Icelandic geography current in the same period also mentions that, "South from Greenland is Helluland, next to it is Markland, thence it is not far to Wineland the Good, which some men think is connected with Africa".[2] The thought may be confused, but the belief in western lands is evident. The upshot of all this is that the Icelanders of the fifteenth century were well aware of the existence of what we call North America.

It is further arguable that the Iceland geographers made maps which indicated the western lands, although no early examples are now traceable. Mr Gathorne-Hardy reproduces two Scandinavian maps of 1590 and 1605 respectively which there is reason to believe are derived from a fifteenth-century archetype. A famous work, *The Voyages of the Zeni*, was published at Venice in 1558. It is a story of explorations in the northern seas by two Italians in the fourteenth century, and it is accompanied by a map which delineates the real and imaginary countries described. Critics have judged the whole to be a concoction of the Renaissance, but it is at least possible that the map was based upon a genuine Icelandic chart. The romancer who evolved the story may have had such a document before him, and his imagination supplied the rest: Stevenson's *Treasure Island* originated in a map drawn to while away a rainy afternoon. The only undoubted fifteenth-century maps of northern origin occur in manuscript Ptolemies. The earliest is by one Claudius Clavus in 1427, and it shows the eastern half of Greenland with the name "Gronlanda". Another of c. 1467, preserved at Warsaw, shows Greenland fully and fairly correctly delineated, with a number of place-names marked. Others of the same sort survive, and although none contains the American lands they do at least prove that visitors to Iceland and Scandinavia in the fifteenth century had an opportunity of learning the position of Greenland.[3]

The English were visitors to Iceland from the fourteenth century onwards. They carried thither cloth, wool and salt, and they brought back fish of various kinds and occasional consignments of volcanic "brymston".

[1] *Ibid.* pp. 99–112. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 287–8.

[3] Examples in A. E. Nordenskiöld's *Fac-Simile Atlas*, Stockholm, 1889, Plate XXX, and in the same author's *Periplus*, Stockholm, 1897, pp. 85, 87, 90.

The seaports chiefly engaged in the trade were those of the Thames and East Anglia, but it has always been asserted, on the authority of contemporary chroniclers, that the Bristol men bore their part. The evidence is good for the fact, although not conclusive about the extent of the business, and I have therefore transcribed a number of entries from the Bristol customs records which place it beyond doubt that in the late fifteenth century Bristol ships and merchants were continuously going to Iceland.[1] It should be mentioned that the accounts have been preserved for only a minority of the years of this period, and that in the reign of Henry VII they dwindle almost completely away. Yet every ledger that we have bears its record of northern voyages, and it is fair to assume that they are representative of a complete series. The details of lading are of interest, for they show that the majority of the ships were owned or chartered not by fishing skippers but by general merchants. The distinction is important. It was trade in fish quite as much as actual fishing that took the Bristol men to Iceland; and throughout the history of maritime discovery we find merchants to have been men of initiative and receptive mind, and fishermen to have been notably the reverse. Fishermen of four nations, to quote an outstanding example, worked in the Newfoundland and adjacent waters all through the sixteenth century without adding any distinguishable contribution to the general stock of knowledge about those regions; and when occasional explorers turned up they had to chart these fishing-grounds *de novo* as if they had been the first to visit them.[2] The fact that the Bristol connexion with Iceland was mercantile makes it more likely that a stimulus to exploration was received from that source.

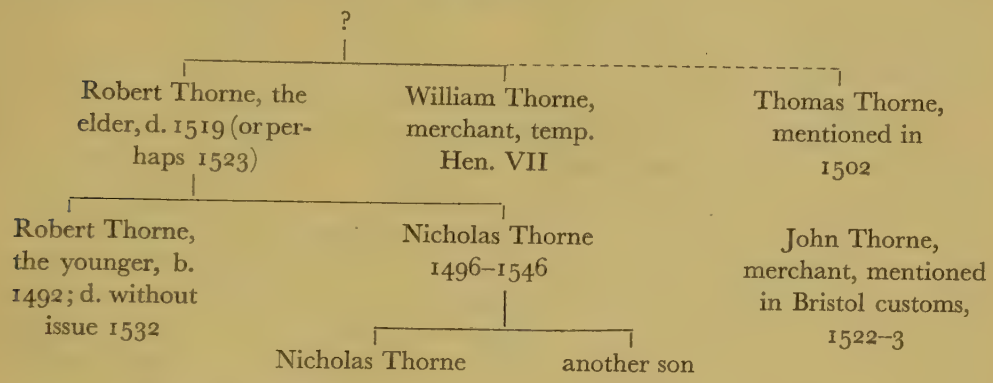
One of the names recorded in the customs entries is that of John Jay the elder, in 1461. There were two John Jays, father and son, whose careers overlapped. The younger, as will be shown below, interested himself in exploration, and he lived on into the great age of discovery in the early sixteenth century. Another name of importance is that of Thorne. The Thornes were a numerous tribe. In the records of Henry VII there are three of them distinguishable, Robert, William and Thomas, the first two undoubtedly merchants. Robert Thorne is found trading with Portugal as early as 1479,[3] and thenceforward appears continuously in the customs records for nearly thirty years. By other evidence he is known to have

[1] No. 2, Bristol trade with Iceland.

[2] It is a remarkable fact that, in spite of annual fishing expeditions from the first years of the sixteenth century, it was not until the close of that century that Newfoundland was definitely known to be an island.

[3] E. 122. 19/14 (19/20 Ed. IV), Dec. 29.

lived until 1519.[1] In 1492–3, a critical period for this inquiry, he was very active, and the ledger mentions him more than a score of times. He had two sons (perhaps more), Robert and Nicholas; and Robert Thorne the younger, born in 1492, has secured a place in history as the author of the *Declaration of the Indies* in which he urged Henry VIII to prosecute the search for a northern passage to Asia. It is to be hoped that Bristol historians, with access to their local archives, will dispel the obscurity which yet surrounds these notable men. At present a tentative table of the family relationships may be set forth as follows:[2]


?
Robert Thorne, the elder, d. 1519 (or perhaps 1523)
William Thorne, merchant, temp. Hen. VII
Thomas Thorne, mentioned in 1502
Robert Thorne, the younger, b. 1492; d. without issue 1532
Nicholas Thorne 1496–1546
John Thorne, merchant, mentioned in Bristol customs, 1522–3
Nicholas Thorne
another son

Other Bristol merchants whose names are prominent in oceanic enterprise were Hugh Elyot, first traceable in 1492–3 and thenceforward repeatedly, Richard Warde (from 1486),[3] Thomas Asshehurst and John Thomas (both from 1492–3). John and Thomas Elyot also appear as merchants in the records of Henry VII. To the same group belongs William Clerk, who described himself as a Londoner, although he did considerable business in Bristol and owned a ship belonging to that port.[4] Some at least of these men were among the backers of John Cabot, and all were

[1] See J. Latimer, *Sixteenth Century Bristol*, 1908, p. 41.

[2] For further evidence and discussion on the Thornes, see J. A. Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise 1485–1558*, Oxford, 1913, pp. 258–62. The will of Robert Thorne the younger, in Cotton MSS. Vitellius A xvi, f. 209 b, alludes to the following relatives of the testator: his sisters Katherine Worseley and Alice Jackman; his uncle William Thorne, and his children; his god-son Robert Thorne; his brother Nicholas Thorne; Vincent Thorne (relationship not stated); and Anagaria, mother of Vincent.

[3] There is also a Richard Warde visible in 1461, probably not the same man. E. 122. 19/1 (1 Ed. IV), May 20, etc.

[4] See below, pp. 213–17.

concerned in following up his work. They constituted an informal brotherhood who traded in association to Iceland, Spain and Portugal, and possibly to the Atlantic islands; and they were acquainted at Bristol with certain Portuguese projectors from the Azores who will be introduced at a later stage in the story. It has therefore seemed necessary to reveal them in that setting of geographical speculation which undoubtedly surrounded them before the enterprise of John Cabot was launched.

In 1480 John Jay the younger promoted the first recorded English expedition for the discovery of unknown lands in the Atlantic. The meagre details survive in a mutilated manuscript at Cambridge, written by one William of Worcester or William Botoner, a relative of the Jays.[1] It relates that on July 15, 1480, an eighty-ton ship owned by John Jay and others set sail from Bristol "to traverse the seas" in search of the island of Brasil, thought to lie to the west of Ireland. The commander, John Lloyd, is described as the most experienced shipmaster of all England, although by the spelling and pronunciation of his name he was evidently a Welshman. The account goes on to say that he remained at sea for nine months, but months is obviously a mistake for weeks, for on September 18 news came to Bristol that he had entered an Irish port. He had not found the island, and had been obliged to return by stormy weather and shortage of supplies. Although there is no corroboration of this venture from any other source, we may take it to be a true story.[2] John Jay was a prominent merchant, who had connexions with Iceland and Portugal. John Lloyd was a no less prominent shipmaster, experienced in navigating the Atlantic waters. He appears in the customs ledgers as early as 1461, and in 1466 he was one of the commanders of the ships that sailed to the mysterious destination described as "partes exteras". For the period covered by his exploration of 1480 there is no surviving customs record. There is a ledger for 1479–80, but its last entry is on July 1st. John Jay is mentioned in this book, and John Lloyd is shown making coasting trips on Dec. 13 and Feb. 8, 1479–80.[3]

A reference to the Atlantic maps already described throws some light upon the idea and method of this voyage. Soleri's map of 1385 and Bartolomeo Pareto's of 1455 both show Brasil as a small island, comparable perhaps to the Isle of Man, not far out from the west coast of Ireland. Other maps locate it more to the southward, but all agree that

[1] No. 7, John Lloyd's voyage.

[2] Written in 1928; but while this book has been in the press an investigator has discovered a corroborative document whose publication may be expected shortly.

[3] E. 122, 19/14 (19–20 Ed. IV).

it was small; it is never drawn of a size anything like that attributed to Antilia, the island of the Seven Cities. The inspiration of Jay and Lloyd therefore came primarily from the Portuguese and Italian speculators, although it may have been modified by stories of America picked up in Iceland. The smallness of the supposed island explains why this voyage did not lead to the complete passage of the Atlantic. To seek an island whose latitude and longitude were unknown it would be necessary to cross and recross the suspected area, to "traverse the seas", as the chronicler justly puts it; and since the island did not exist there was no result. Not until a new motive came forward, that of reaching a continent, the vast eastern coast of Asia covering all possible latitudes, were the navigators moved to push steadily westwards on a single track with the certainty that if they persevered they would hit something. And the first who took that course, Columbus and Cabot, were immediately successful.

There is a hint that a dozen years later Bristol was still prosecuting this same unfruitful type of enterprise. In 1498 the Spaniard Pedro de Ayala, whilst reporting on the proceedings of John Cabot, wrote: "For the last seven years the people of Bristol have sent out every year, two, three, or four caravels, in search of the island of Brasil and the Seven Cities, according to the fancy of this Genoese (con la fantasia deste Ginoves)".[1] There is evident confusion of thought in this statement, for, as will be shown, the motive of Cabot, the Genoese referred to, was not to seek islands but a continent. It is therefore a question whether De Ayala was right about the motive of these expeditions, or whether he was truly informed that Cabot had a hand in them. Perhaps to adopt the latter interpretation is to read too much into his phrase, which is very vague. "Con la fantasia deste Ginoves" may simply have meant that a western search was what Cabot was promoting at the time of writing, without wishing to imply that he had been personally concerned in the former voyages. On the whole, this piece of evidence must be taken to show that in the 1490's the Bristol men were still following criss-cross tracks in search of islands, after the manner of Lloyd in 1480. The only surviving customs ledger of the period, that for 1492–3, yields no hint of any such voyage. If no cargo was taken it could not be expected to do so, since the customs officials were concerned only with levying duties on exports and imports. A very remote possibility of an expedition having been made in 1494 will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.[2] It is omitted here since, if it took place at all, it belonged to the newer series of continental, not

[1] No. 33, Ayala to the Spanish Sovereigns, 1498, July 25.

[2] See below, pp. 149–53.

island, quests. The sending forth of these repeated expeditions testifies to considerable earnestness on the part of the men concerned, undoubtedly the Jays, Thornes and Elyots who were so prominent in the trade of the period. The English merchant of those days worked on a narrow margin of capital, for large accumulations of cash were hardly practicable; and the expense of sending even a few ships on fruitless voyages must have been a serious drain on resources. It indicates both faith and determination.

We have seen how the Atlantic was sending out its call like a living thing, how its coasts were alive with rumours and imaginings about unknown lands, and how the Ptolemaic geography, long fermenting in cells and cloisters, was taking hold of the cultured public of the fifteenth century and was almost ready to make its final advance into the consciousness of those who owned ships and knew how to sail them. There remained yet another convergent force to complete the grand thrust westward in the last decade of the century, the force of commercial enterprise. The trade in Asiatic produce, in spices, silks, muslins, gems, dyestuffs and rare curiosities—but above all, in spices—had become a necessity to wealthy people of the Middle Ages, and a source of gain to a whole fraternity of merchants scattered throughout Christendom. It had been conducted for centuries through the Black Sea and the Levant, to whose coasts came Asiatic caravans by many different routes. Moslem and Mongolian conquests had sometimes hindered this trade, but they had never stopped it. The Ottoman Turks, the fiercest and most contemptuous of the conquerors, had grasped Syria and Asia Minor and the Balkan peninsula and had consolidated their empire by the capture of Constantinople in 1453. Egypt was not yet in their hands, although destined shortly to succumb to them, and Alexandria was the chief depôt of the spices brought by Arab shipping across the Indian Ocean. Even in the lands held by the Turks the trading factories of Venice and Genoa still existed, although under increasing disabilities. It is therefore too much to say that the Turkish advance closed the old trade routes, but it is true that it rendered them more precarious. As the fifteenth century progressed the difficulties grew greater. The Turks took to the sea, and the Mediterranean was ravaged by hordes of irregular rovers who were little subject to the control of the Sultan's government. They were not confined to the Levant, and a whole series of pirate ports became active in all the semi-independent Moslem states reaching westwards to the Straits of Gibraltar. The Europeans kept up a stiff but losing fight, and many were driven to speculate on the possibility of a route to the East which should altogether

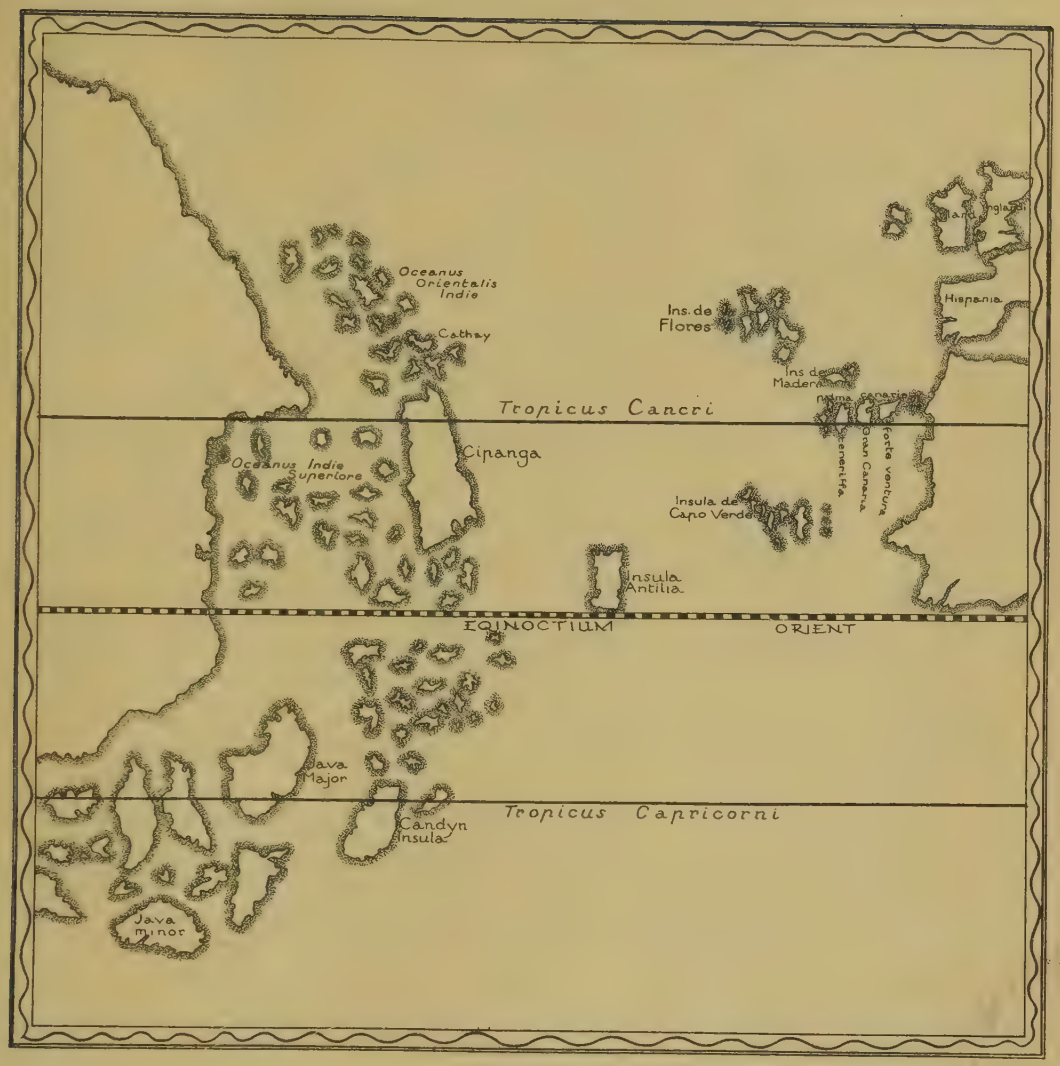
avoid the Mediterranean. With Cardinal d'Ailly in 1410 quoting Seneca on the existence of an Asiatic shore a few days' sail from Spain, it might have been expected that the western route would at once have been attempted. But that leaven took long to reach the men of action. The first effect of the Turkish menace was the southward discovery of the African coast by the Portuguese. The strategic motive seems at first to have been to make an eastward crossing of Africa somewhere north of the equator, and to strike alliance with the Christian empire of Prester John believed to lie at the sources of the Nile, thus bringing the Turk between two fires. For reasons now obvious this produced no practical outcome, and about 1481 the plan changed to a circumnavigation of Africa and a direct sea-route to the riches of the East. The discovery of the Cape by Bartholomew Diaz in 1486 promised success, but not until 1499 did Vasco da Gama come home to Portugal with the news that the thing was done.

Meanwhile the western project, so long canvassed, had at last found its men. Martin Behaim, a gentleman of Nuremberg, not an ecclesiastic but a man of the world who had lived in Portugal and travelled to the Azores, made his famous globe in 1492 after years of previous study. The globe shows what the Ptolemaic maps had implied but had not shown, the Atlantic Ocean as a unit, with Europe and Africa forming its eastern shores and Asia bounding it on the west, the whole, as its inscription states, "borrowed with great care from the works of Ptolemy, Pliny, Strabo and Marco Polo, and brought together, both lands and seas, according to their configuration and position". It shows also, besides the Antilia and St Brandan's of old tradition, the Cipango or Japan whose commercial wealth had been described from hearsay in Marco Polo's book. Marco, as a much-quoted authority, came into fashion later than did d'Ailly and Ptolemy, and his Cipango is a symptom of the new trading interest that thought rather of spices than of pious traditions. Next year, 1493, another German, Jerome Münzer, also of Nuremberg, wrote to the King of Portugal urging him in the names of Aristotle, Seneca and Cardinal d'Ailly to take advantage of the fact that "the inhabitable extreme east is very near the west" and to send an expedition across the Atlantic to Asia.[1] The letter shows that this was but a reiteration of similar advice from no less a person than the Emperor Maximilian I, to whom the project had been presented by Martin Behaim. But already, although the writer did not know it, the prize had fallen to Spain, for Columbus had returned from the West Indies four months before the letter was written.

[1] Letter printed in Harrisse, *Disc. of N. America*, pp. 393–5.

To Columbus belongs the honour of having conducted the first transatlantic voyage to a successful issue. His most recent serious historian, the late Henry Vignaud, has contended that he did more than he set out to do, that his exploit was in conception one of the old type for the discovery of the elusive islands, and not a push for the opposite continent; and that it was only during its course that he announced the objective to be Asia. These views have met with a mixed reception. Some hold them proved, and others do not. My own conclusion is that Vignaud has made a good case for regarding the famous Toscanelli map and correspondence as forgeries committed after 1493, and that there is consequently no evidence that Columbus formed his great design a dozen years before he put it into execution. On the other hand, the further contention that Columbus had no thought of reaching Asia when he sailed in 1492 does not carry the same conviction. It rests largely on negative evidence, and the general circumstances point in the opposite direction. It is true that Columbus was not commissioned in plain words to discover Cathay or India, but only continents and islands unspecified. But what other continent than Asia could have been in anybody's mind? King Ferdinand had reason for verbal caution. Columbus had insisted upon a grant of the lordship and jurisdiction over anything he might discover. To include the territories of the supposed Khan of Cathay by name would amount to a declaration of war on that potentate. Marco Polo had described him as a mighty prince whose subjects possessed great ships capable of long voyages.[1] If Columbus revealed the possibility of the Atlantic passage the advantage would be mutual, and the consequence might be quite as likely a Cathayan invasion of Spain as a Spanish invasion of Cathay. It was therefore best to wait and see. When Columbus reached Hayti and Cuba and saw the inhabitants there was no more need to hesitate. These poor savages were no peril to Spain, and the discovery and prospective conquest of the East might be triumphantly proclaimed. Further than this, Vignaud himself admits that Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the partner of Columbus in the conduct of the expedition, did clearly intend to discover Asia and was provided with letters of recommendation to the Great Khan.

[1] The Empire of the Great Khan, as Marco Polo had described it, had long since passed away. Subsequent travellers had revealed as much. But neither Columbus nor the Spanish sovereigns seem to have heard of their adventures, and the whole undertaking went forward as if Marco Polo's story held good. It is one more instance of the extremely slow dissemination of knowledge even in the comparatively progressive fifteenth century.



The Atlantic as shown in the Globe of Martin Behaim, 1492.

On the whole then, although the Toscanelli plan, alleged to have been drawn for the King of Portugal in 1474 and repeated afterwards to Columbus, is now discredited, there is yet no reason for rejecting Columbus as the pioneer in action of the westward search for Asia.

If not Columbus, on Vignaud's showing Pinzon fills that position. Pinzon is one of those men whom we may divine to have been greater than we can prove. Columbus held that sublime estimate of self which so often carries men to high command and sometimes masks actual mediocrity. Pinzon may, for all we know, have been the brain and sinew of the enterprise. He left no literary executors, as Columbus did in his son Ferdinand and his friend Las Casas, without whose labours he would cut a smaller figure than he does. Pinzon is one of the unknowns of history. All that we can say of him is that he had faith in the Cathay voyage, and that his conviction was independent of the teaching of Columbus.

It is another injustice of fate that after Portugal had done all the preliminary work in the Atlantic, Spain should have reaped the harvest. The explanation lies in the character of Columbus. He set such a fantastic price upon his services that Portugal, which had granted a score of colonizing patents to her own subjects on much lower terms, thought his demands preposterous. Henry VII, less experienced, took the same view, if we may trust the story of the mission of Bartholomew Columbus to England. Spain was also inexperienced, and Columbus, when inducing Ferdinand to grant his terms, must have congratulated himself on having found a generous king. He did not foresee that such a bargain would never be kept.

All these transactions mark the culmination of the geographical effort of the Middle Ages and the convergence of the practical and theoretical lines of advance. By 1490 the quest of Cathay had permeated the study, the court and the quayside; and if Columbus was by good luck the first in action, he was but one among many in conception. When he sailed out of Palos with his three well-found vessels there was another, his equal in all but fortune, still searching vainly for the means to do the like. That man was John Cabot.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN AND SEBASTIAN CABOT

JOHN CABOT, the discoverer of North America, enters history from the void on March 29, 1476. On that day he was granted the privilege of Venetian citizenship, having previously been an alien resident in the republic.[1] Thenceforward for another twenty years, until March 5, 1496, when he received his letters patent from Henry VII, mere hazy glimpses of him are obtainable, without a single date that can be definitely fixed; and the same is true of his son Sebastian. This early period may be called the pre-history of the Cabots and is the subject of the present chapter. Although necessarily lacking in definition, it will be found to comprise some topics important in their later story.

The grant of naturalization conferred all the rights and privileges of a native-born Venetian except that of overseas trade, which could be obtained by fulfilling a further formality within a year of the original grant. The chief condition of naturalization was that the applicant should furnish proof of continuous residence in Venice for at least fifteen years. Whether this proof was substantial or a mere legal fiction we have no means of telling, but on the face of it the document gives evidence that Cabot had settled in Venice not later than 1461. How old he was at the time of his immigration must also rest unknown. He was presumably of legal age when the naturalization was granted, and was therefore born not later than 1455, and possibly earlier.

From this transaction a question at once arises. What was John Cabot's nationality before he became a Venetian? His name gives little help to the answer. In the document of 1476 it is given as Caboto, a possible Italian surname. But under various forms the name is cosmopolitan. There was a noble family of Chabot in France in the sixteenth century. In the reign of Henry VI there was a Richard Cavot at Bristol,[2] in command of a ship of that port. In the 1470's there was a Spaniard or Basque named Sabot trading also into Bristol from Fontarabia.[3] In England the name of the historical Cabots was capable of many renderings: Cabot, Calbot, Caboot, Cabota, Kabotto, Shabot, Tabot, Gabote do not exhaust the list. No clue to original nationality is obtainable from this protean word. Before leaving the matter of the name we may digress for a moment

[1] No. 8, Cabot's naturalization.

[2] Customs ledger, year unknown, E. 122, 161/31, June 13.

[3] E. 122, 19/8, Apr. 17, and subsequent entries in 19/10, 19/10 A and 19/11.

to its pronunciation. The English form Caboot is apparently a phonetic spelling, and it indicates a vowel pronounced as in modern "boat", not "boot". But whether we accept this and pronounce "Ca-bóte" or relapse into the easier "Cáb-ot", there is no warrant for silencing the final consonant, as is so often done under the impression, seemingly, that the name is French. Whatever Cabot may have been, he is highly unlikely to have been a Frenchman.

The question of original nationality resolves itself into two alternatives. John Cabot was either an Englishman or a Genoese. For the first of these suppositions the evidence is of an unusual type. In 1837 Mr Rawdon Brown, an English investigator of Venetian history, published a book in which he referred to Cabot as a Venetian. Many years afterwards he wrote on a copy of this book two marginal notes, whose effect is that in 1855–6 he had found documents in the Venetian Archives which proved (1) that Cabot first came to Venice in 1461; (2) that he married a Venetian woman; (3) that he was by birth an Englishman.[1] The first of these statements may in part be deduced from the naturalization grant already referred to. The second, on the Venetian wife, is contained in a letter of 1497 published by Rawdon Brown himself. The third, on the English nationality, has never been found by any other searcher, and was not alluded to by Brown in his subsequently published *Calendar* of the state papers in Venice relating to English affairs. That is as far as the evidence goes. Rawdon Brown was sure he saw this document in 1855–6, and no one has seen it since. If he had been an inexperienced amateur we could dismiss his assertion as a mistake. But he was an archivist of long standing, who is unlikely to have made an ill-founded claim in the positive manner indicated by his notes. Pride of nationality, like pride of family, works in various ways. This document, if extant, deprived Italy of the honour of having given birth to a great man. If some patriot of the *Risorgimento* should have made away with it the act would not be unparalleled in our own country. Meanwhile, for those who like long shots, I have recorded the existence of Richard Cavot, Englishman of Bristol in the time of Henry VI, and they may couple with him the fact that when John Cabot the Venetian came to England it was in Bristol that he settled. The whole constitutes a very long shot indeed.

The claim to Genoese nationality is more fully attested. It was made during the lifetime of John Cabot, although not by the man himself. He described himself simply as a Venetian in all his official dealings with the English government. But on July 25, 1498, Pedro de Ayala, a temporary

[1] No. 9, Statement of John Cabot's English origin.

Spanish ambassador in England, wrote a report on the Cabot discoveries, in the course of which he remarked: "I have seen the map drawn by the discoverer, who is another Genoese like Columbus".[1] He repeated the word "Genoese" twice again in the same despatch. This is good contemporary evidence, if only we can be sure that the Spaniard was making a strict use of words. He may have been. He certainly took a lively interest in the discovery. But what we cannot do is to get inside his mind and determine whether he did not use "Genoese" as a synonym for "Italian", under the influence of the association of ideas with Columbus, who was both an Italian and a Genoese. That is the sole contemporary evidence that John Cabot was a Genoese. Henry Harrisse indeed adduced a similar remark alleged to have been made at the same time by Ruy Gonzales de Puebla, the permanent Spanish ambassador then in England.[2] But Dr H. P. Biggar has shown that the document supposed to have been De Puebla's despatch was not written by him, but was simply an extract made in Spain of part of De Ayala's letter already quoted.[3] The two testimonies are therefore one, De Ayala's. There is, however, something more of a later date. In the early years of Elizabeth's reign, when Sebastian Cabot, well known in England, was but lately dead, a number of chroniclers described him as "an Englishman, born at Bristol, but the son of a Genoese". The spelling and phrasing vary, but the above is the substance of notices to be found in Lanquet (1559), Grafton (1569), Holinshed (1577), and Stow (1580). These notices all came from some common source and constitute one testimony.[4] They could not have been drawn from De Ayala's report of 1498, for that was inaccessible to English writers. It is almost certain that they originated with Sebastian Cabot. Sebastian in his old age was fond of asserting that he was an Englishman born. The claim was false, as will be shown below; he was born a Venetian. And so we have his statement that his father was a Genoese, which may have been true, coupled always with his statement that he himself was born at Bristol, which is demonstrably false. He is obviously not a good witness. Yet this must be said, that whereas he had something to gain by

[1] No. 33, De Ayala to the Spanish Sovereigns.

[2] H. Harrisse, *John and Sebastian Cabot*, London, 1896, pp. 11, 14–15.

[3] See *Revue Hispanique*, Vol. xv (Paris, 1906), pp. 842–5.

[4] Detailed references in Harrisse, *op. cit.* pp. 16–26. Mr Harrisse was inclined to except Stow from the statement that they were of common origin, because Stow worked from a document in his exclusive possession. I cannot agree. Stow, like all others of his time, interpolated external information into his paraphrases of documents, and I believe he did so here.

describing himself as an Englishman, there is no apparent motive for his calling his father a Genoese if such was not the truth. We may take it that he had no knowledge that John Cabot was of English origin. If he had thought that he would certainly have said it.

Such is the present state of the question of John Cabot's nationality. There is evidence, arresting but by no means conclusive, that he was English. There is rather better evidence, although not conclusive, that he was Genoese. There is the negative evidence of his own and his son's silence on an English origin. On the whole the Genoese interpretation carries it, but the matter is by no means so definitely proved as some have thought.

That Cabot's wife was a Venetian rests upon the evidence of a compatriot, Lorenzo Pasqualigo, who mentioned the fact in a letter written in August, 1497, when the discovery of North America was fresh in everyone's mouth.[1] Her name is unknown. They had three sons, Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio, of whom the first and the last have left absolutely no trace in history save that they were living and were named in the letters patent granted to their father in March, 1496, and were still at Bristol in the following year. After that they pass into darkness. Sebastian, on the other hand, enjoyed a long and notable career, and is last heard of as an old man in 1557.

It is of great importance to establish as nearly as possible the date of Sebastian Cabot's birth, for much depends upon it. On this point an assumption has been generally adopted which I believe to be unwarranted. It is that because the patent of 1496 was granted to "John Cabot...and to Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio, sons of the said John, and to the heirs and deputies of them",[2] therefore Sebastian was at least twenty-one years of age and was born not later than 1475. The argument is that such a grant could not have been made to a minor. It is quite untenable. John Cabot was the principal grantee, but he was receiving hereditary privileges which were to pass through his sons to their descendants. If we are to assume that the three sons named were necessarily of legal age, we are also bound to assume that it would have been impossible to include any minor son in the privileges, which is absurd; and we are equally bound to assume that the sons' heirs, also privileged, were likewise of legal age, which is more absurd, since they were yet unborn. All that the patent really proves is that John Cabot had three sons, and it proves nothing whatever about their ages. But there was another patent, granted two

[1] No. 20, Pasqualigo's letter of Aug. 23.

[2] No. 16, The first letters patent to John Cabot.

years later, on February 3, 1498.[1] It was not a grant of privileges, but simply a commission to perform an administrative act, the impressment of shipping at the king's rates of payment. Now this patent was addressed merely to John Cabot and his deputies, without any mention of his sons. Is this not fair evidence that the sons were not regarded as active agents in the business? There are several possible reasons why they were not actively employed, but the most obvious is that they were not old enough. The assumption from the second patent is therefore that Sebastian Cabot, even in 1498, had not come to man's estate.

We pass to something more definite. On December 31, 1536, Sebastian Cabot, then in Spain, was called as a witness in an important lawsuit. He declared himself to be "de mas de 50 años", or in the equivalent English phrase "fifty years of age and upwards".[2] That means that he was in his fifty-first year, if he was speaking with legal precision, or, if more vaguely, that he was not much more than fifty years of age; whence it follows that he was born in or a little before the year 1486. Unhappily this is not all. Somewhat over a year afterwards, in April 1538, he was again a witness in a lawsuit, and the documents twice give his age. In one place they represent him as saying that he was about fifty-eight, and in another about fifty years of age. These figures yield as dates of birth c. 1480 and c. 1488 respectively, and one of them must be a clerical error, a mistake between 8 and 0. The question is, which? It seems likely that Cabot actually said "fifty". On the former occasion he had given that as his age. Now, sixteen months afterwards, he was asked the same question. His answer was what an elderly but not yet venerable official might be tempted to make: "Fifty, a little more or less"—not quite correct but somewhere near the truth. Once again; in October 1543, he gave evidence in court, and here the record is "about sixty", or born c. 1483. My impression from these figures is that the date 1480 results from a clerk's mistake, and that 1488 is rather late in view of the fact (to be established in a subsequent chapter) that Sebastian commanded an expedition in 1509; and that 1483 and 1486 represent the most probable dates afforded by this legal evidence. To it we may add a suggestive picture of the man at a later stage. In April, 1556, when again in England, he went down to Gravesend to bid godspeed to a small expedition setting out on a voyage of discovery. The commander describes how "the good old gentleman Master Cabota" inspected the vessel and gave alms to the poor, and then

[1] No. 28, The second letters patent to John Cabot.

[2] This and the following legal references are to be found in J. T. Medina, *El Veneciano Sebastián Caboto al servicio de España*, Santiago de Chile, 1908, I, p. 10.

went ashore and banqueted with his friends and the departing explorers; and not content with that, "for very joy that he had to see the towardness of our intended discovery, he entered into the dance himself, amongst the rest of the young and lusty company".[1] It was not a bad performance for an old man of about seventy-one, as he was if we believe his own statements recorded above; but it was rather remarkable if he was eighty-one (or more), as he must have been if he was of legal age in 1496. In default of any other evidence on Sebastian Cabot's age, the most reasonable conclusion is that he was born in 1483–6.[2]

His place of birth is more easily settled. During the middle period of his life, which he passed in Spanish service, he stated frequently that he was born in Venice and was taken to England while yet a child. This assertion occurs in state papers and in the writings of contemporary historians. The only exception to the general agreement of the evidence is that King Ferdinand's ministers described him as an Englishman in a *cédula* of 1512; but this may have been a natural misapprehension arising from the fact that he had just quitted the English service. At a much later date, in the reign of Edward VI, he returned to England, where he became personally known to the geographer Richard Eden, who printed this note about him: "Sebastian Cabot told me that he was born in Bristol and that at four years old he was carried with his father to Venice, and so returned again into England with his father after certain years, whereby he was thought to have been born in Venice".[3] By the law of that time a man born in England, although of foreign parents, was an English subject, and it is obvious that Sebastian had something to gain by so representing himself. But his statement was false, as a recently discovered document proves. In 1505, half a century before the date of Eden's note, Sebastian Cabot was granted an annuity by Henry VII, and the warrant describes him as a Venetian.[4] That description must have been furnished by himself. He had as great an incentive then as later to make himself out an Englishman, but in 1505 he could not safely do it. Too many contemporaries knew the facts about his family, and a false statement would have invalidated the grant. So to Henry VII Sebastian described

[1] No. 11, Sebastian Cabot in 1556.

[2] Harrisse concluded that Sebastian was born either before 1470 or before 1474. The former date would make him at least eighty-six at the time of the Gravesend entertainment—*John and Sebastian Cabot*, 1896, pp. 28–9.

[3] Richard Eden, *Decades of the New World*, London, 1555, f. 255, marginal note.

[4] No. 48, The grant to Sebastian Cabot.

himself as a Venetian, as his father had done, and that admission is conclusive that he was born in Venice.

These inquiries clear the ground to some extent for a consideration of John Cabot's early history. He was a Venetian resident until 1476, and his son was born in Venice about 1483–6. It is therefore evident that he did not permanently settle in England until after the latter date. During his Venetian period he was employed in the foreign trade of that city, and he claimed that on one occasion he had crossed the Isthmus of Suez and penetrated to Mecca. There he had seen the spices borne by caravans from distant countries and had learned from Asiatic merchants that the goods were transferred through many hands from the remote eastern regions where they were produced. This had set him reasoning that since the earth was round the easiest access to the spiceries might be by a westward voyage.[1] The information, which is at second-hand, may be a little confused. The chief entrepôt of the spice trade was at Alexandria, where Venetians dealt with the Arab traders. But Mecca did become an important centre in the fifteenth century and was visited by Europeans; and there is no reason to doubt the main fact, that John Cabot had been engaged in this trade and that it was the stimulus of his exploring projects. He was not, like the Portuguese and the Bristol men of 1480, a seeker of Atlantic islands; he was, like Columbus, bent on the discovery of the east coast of Asia. And to all appearance he was no mere imitator of Columbus, for he had formed his plan before the news of 1493 arrived to excite the mercantile world. We have a few other sidelights. He was, again like Columbus, of plebeian origin, poor, and a persuasive speaker,[2] a man with a burning conviction which imposed itself upon others and overcame obstacles, one of those practical visionaries, we may guess, whose guiding faith had not been conducive to worldly prosperity.

Was he seaman, or navigator, or merchant? It is hard to be precise. The three classes in those days were distinct, and yet shaded into one another. In England there was many a ship-master who was innocent of charts and instruments, save only the magnetic compass. The Latin seamen were perhaps better instructed, but even among them the pilot or navigator was in a distinct category, and there were trusted navigators who had never gone aloft or taken the helm, essentially men of science and landsmen. The merchant had more to do with the sea than he has now. He often accompanied his cargo in person and was sometimes a skilled navigator, although hardly ever a seaman. The merchant was

[1] No. 22, Raimondo de Soncino to the Duke of Milan.

[2] *Ibid.* Soncino wrote from personal acquaintance with Cabot.

generally the captain of the ship, but the detail of command devolved upon the master mariner, a distinction which survived in the British Navy until the eighteenth century. John Cabot is described, by those who reported his son's statements, as a merchant. His contemporaries in London in 1497–8 were equally clear that he was a great navigator and an expert mariner; but they were landsmen who may not have distinguished between those functions. He was certainly not a capitalist. We may perhaps most truly regard him as a factor, a supervisor of other men's goods, with a sound knowledge of navigation and geography. The hazy indications do not suggest that he was a professional seaman.

There is evidence that John Cabot advocated his project for some years before he found means of executing it. De Ayala, the Spanish ambassador of 1498, says that he had been in both Lisbon and Seville in search of assistance, but does not give any hint of the dates of these journeys. He says also that the Bristol men had been for the past seven years sending out ships "in accordance with the fancy of this Genoese", but that, as we have seen, is an ambiguous phrase which is not positive proof that Cabot had inspired the expeditions.[1] More significant is the choice of Bristol as a place of residence. It was not a port at which Italians did much business. Their chief mercantile colony was in London, and the port of call of the Flanders Galleys, the great liners owned by the Venetian government, was Southampton. Thither also resorted the Genoese carracks which brought eastern produce to England. Italian merchants and ships occur but rarely in the Bristol customs records, although Spaniards and Portuguese are prominent. It therefore seems likely that it was discovery rather than commerce that attracted Cabot to Bristol. For discovery the town was the most promising base in England, for reasons already considered.

We have now to consider when he settled in Bristol. A report made to the Venetian Senate in 1536 states that John Cabot went to England in the Flanders Galleys, a natural procedure for a merchant or factor, but it gives no date.[2] An English writer of the reign of James I asserted that the explorer dwelt for some time in London, in the Blackfriars.[3] The statement is unsupported by evidence and is quite unreliable, for other references show that its writer confused John Cabot with his son Sebastian, of whom the Blackfriars residence is very likely true. The View of Account of the Bristol customers, mentioning the payment of the King's pension in 1498, says that it had been granted to John Cabot "lately of the town

[1] See above, p. 133. [2] No. 52, Marcantonio Contarini's report.

[3] William Strachey, *History of Travail into Virginia*, London, 1612, p. 6.

of Bristol",[1] a phrase which implies a stay of some continuance and that Bristol had been the normal place of residence. Sebastian Cabot's talk, as reported by his friend Peter Martyr who knew him in Spain in 1512–15, brings us nearer to a date. He was carried into England by his parents, he said, whilst little more than an infant.[2] This would give a date of settlement not long after 1483–6, certainly before 1490. It is true that in later years Sebastian contradicted this, but his motives for doing so have been explained, and his earliest statement is the most trustworthy. Against this early date we have a report of the arrival in England of a person who was evidently John Cabot at the close of 1495.[3] Its writer, the ambassador De Puebla, had only just heard of the man, but since De Puebla lived in London, and Cabot at Bristol, a misapprehension is intelligible; and Cabot may have been abroad on some visit in pursuit of his plans. The general inference is that John Cabot did not come to England before 1484, that he probably did so between that date and 1490, and that he lived chiefly at Bristol. His visits to Lisbon and Seville cannot be dated, nor can the length of his stay at those places be ascertained.

The Bristol customs records are an obvious source of information in which to search for traces of John Cabot's residence in the port. If he had been doing business as a merchant or had been employed as a master mariner there would be entries containing his name. The conditions, however, were not encouraging for a foreign merchant to make Bristol his headquarters, since the differential customs duties were a handicap. Englishmen paid a low tariff, and unprivileged foreigners a higher one. There were treaties which gave the favourable rate to Spaniards and to the Easterlings of the Hanseatic League, but not to other foreigners unless they had been naturalized. The records therefore contain the names of a large number of Spaniards paying as *indigeni* and of a fair sprinkling of Portuguese, who paid as *alieni* but overcame the obstacle by their monopoly of the sugar trade. Easterlings seldom came to the west of England, and Italians, who had a virtual monopoly of the spice import and a privilege of exporting raw wool to their own cities, worked mainly from London and Southampton. An Italian trading in his own name would therefore have been at a disadvantage in the west country, and the result in Cabot's case is what we might expect; there is no trace of him as a merchant in Bristol. The records are by no means complete. The detailed books containing the names of the traders have been preserved only for 1485–6, 1486–7 and 1492–3, each unit covering a complete year from

[1] No. 26. [2] No. 49, Peter Martyr's account.

[3] No. 14, The Spanish sovereigns to De Puebla.

Michaelmas to Michaelmas. The first is perhaps too early, but 1486–7 is a likely, and 1492–3 an almost certain, period for Cabot's presence in the town, and the omission of his name is as good evidence as a negative ever can be that he was not in business as a principal. The next detailed book is that of 1503–4, when he may have been dead.

There remains the less likely possibility that he was a master mariner. Here there are three names in the records which should be considered even if rejected. They are those of John Corbet, Johannes de Savot and Johannes Chavet.[1] Corbet is almost impossible as a corruption of Cabot. The seaman of that name appears frequently from 1485 to 1487 as the commander of a Bristol ship, the *Michael*, and he was evidently a local man. Johannes de Savot occurs in the previous reign, in a ledger of 1483, rather too early for any identification with Cabot. Moreover, he was in command of a Spanish ship, and was a member of a family of Fontarabia which had sent other representatives into Bristol. Johannes Chavet appears only once, in June 1486, when he entered Bristol as master of a Spanish vessel of San Sebastian with cargo for John Jay and others. There is no fatal objection to identifying him with John Cabot, but the probabilities are against it. If the ship had come from Seville it might be argued that Cabot was working his passage from that port; but the lading included iron, which was produced only in North Spain. In all probability this "Johannes Chavet" was one of the Savots of Fontarabia. I have printed these entries in case some connecting link should in future be found to render them more important. But in themselves they prove nothing, and we are left without any clue to Cabot's employments in his Bristol period. A century ago, it is true, the author of a history of Newfoundland made a definite statement that in 1495 John Cabot was employed on behalf of England in a negotiation with Denmark over disputes in the Iceland fishery, and that his success brought him into favour with Henry VII.[2] No evidence was cited in support of this story, and none has since been discovered; Harrisse followed up the matter without result. We must reject it as an invented myth based on Cabot's connexion with Bristol and on Bristol's trade with Iceland. It is quite true that there were negotiations with Denmark at the time indicated, but it is very unlikely that a poor and humbly born foreigner would have played any part in them when substantial Bristol merchants were available to speak for their own interests. The history of maritime discovery is encumbered

[1] No. 10, Customs entries.

[2] L. A. Anspach, *Hist. of Newfoundland*, London, 1819, p. 25, quoted by Harrisse, *J. and S. Cabot*, p. 40.

with baseless stories, and probability must be demanded in default of proof before we can consider them seriously.

In so unsatisfactory a condition stands the record of John Cabot's actions up to 1496. On his ideas and education it is possible to say a little more. They seem to have been closely parallel to those attributed by the traditional account to Columbus. Cabot, as his contemporaries recorded in 1497–8, believed that the sphericity of the earth rendered a westward exploration worth attempting. He held that the north-east corner of Asia lay in about the same latitude as England, and that its coast, once reached, could be followed south-westward to the tropics, where a rich spice-trade could be tapped. He made much of the great island of Cipango (Japan), which he placed off the Asiatic coast a good deal to the southward of its real position. All this represents the classical geography as popularized in the fifteenth century by d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, and illuminated by the *Travels of Marco Polo*, to which the prominence of Cipango is due. Thus far Columbus and Cabot go together, but in their solutions of the problem they differ radically. Columbus crossed the Atlantic in 28° N., the latitude of the Canaries. He was utilizing Portuguese experience which had revealed the steadiness of the north-east trades in that belt, and, taught from the same source, he returned in the higher latitude of the westerly winds to Europe. Cabot, as will be shown, chose the latitude of the British Isles for his outward passage. It would not yield him a dependable wind, as his Bristol friends no doubt told him, but it would be a much shorter distance if Asia lay as the maps represented it, for the higher the latitude the shorter the mileage covered by each degree from east to west. Here may be traced the Bristol influence and the lore gathered in Iceland about the western coasts. Helluland, Markland, Vinland were undoubtedly to be found across the ocean, and Cabot was sure they were the outer regions of Cathay. It was with the certainty of finding a continent at no impossible distance that he chose the tempestuous northern track in preference to the easy sailing of the trade wind.

He was evidently a well-read man. Marco Polo was a gospel to him, as we can recognize in the surviving summaries of his conversation. In addition he was a practical cartographer. He made maps and globes with his own hand and could lecture convincingly on what they revealed. How much, if anything, he owed to Columbus we cannot tell. For all we know the debt may have lain in the contrary direction.

CHAPTER III

THE BRISTOL MERCHANTS AND THE PATENT OF 1496

THERE are indications that the discovery of North America took place in 1494. It is necessary to examine them, for even though they may not carry conviction of that occurrence they do cast a faint light upon the Bristol pioneers of the time.

A perfectly clear statement is inscribed upon a large world-map printed in 1544, of which the only known copy is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. It says that the land in the vicinity of Cape Breton was discovered by John Cabot and his son Sebastian on June 24, 1494, at five o'clock in the morning.[1] Unfortunately there is little trust to be placed in the assertion. Incontrovertible evidence proves that John Cabot did reach North America in the summer of 1497, and that his contemporaries who spoke with him and recorded the fact had no inkling that he had been there before. If he had made the discovery three years earlier he would almost certainly have said so, for there is no discernible motive for concealment. The authorship of the inscription has been attributed to Sebastian Cabot, but the evidence amounts to nothing more than that he may have supplied some information that was subsequently garbled before it came into print. The most feasible suggestion is that if the original statement was authentic the date 1494 is a printer's or transcriber's error for 1497. The matter will be more fully dealt with in the treatment of that year's events. Here it need only be said that the map affords no serious testimony to a discovery at the earlier date.

If a discovery was made in 1494 it was by the two Bristol merchants Robert Thorne and Hugh Elyot. In 1580 John Dee the philosopher and man of science, who took a keen interest in exploration, prepared a map of the North Atlantic, now preserved among the Cotton MSS. in the British Museum. On the back of it he wrote an argument to prove the Queen's title to North America, Greenland, and all other Arctic regions not comprised in the territories of the Czar of Muscovy. The statement, as its internal evidence shows, was composed in 1578, a little earlier than the map. Its appeal was to the right of prior discovery. The discoveries alleged were five in number: (1) Madoc, a Welsh prince, made a colony in America in the twelfth century; (2) "Circa An. 1494. Mr. Robert Thorn his father, and Mr. Eliot of Bristow, discovered Newfownd Land";

[1] No. 19, Inscription on the Paris Map.

(3) Brandan discovered western lands in the sixth century; (4) "Circa An. 1497. Sebastian Caboto, sent by King Henry the Seventh, did discover from Newfownd Land so far...to Laborador"; (5) in 1576 and 1577 Martin Frobisher discovered the broken lands "sowth of Laborador" (evidently so named for Greenland, as in many other instances).[1]

It is apparent that Dee did not write as a critical historian, for he gave as much weight to the legends of Madoc and Brandan as to the authenticated discoveries of Cabot and Frobisher. In his substitution of Sebastian for John Cabot he was committing an error common to nearly all the sixteenth-century writers, and cannot on that account be charged with any special carelessness. After making the above deductions from his merits as an authority we are left with the significant fact that he believed there were two discoveries of North America under Henry VII, by Thorne and Elyot in 1494, and by Cabot in 1497. Moreover, he was the first writer to express that belief. The Cabot discovery, in one form or another, was common knowledge, but for the Thorne and Elyot story Dee was possessed of some information exclusive to himself. Its source was as follows. In 1527 Robert Thorne the younger, son of the Robert Thorne of 1494, had written to Henry VIII of a proposal to search for a northern passage to Asia; and at about the same time he had addressed a more detailed memorial on the subject to Dr Edward Lee, the English ambassador then in Spain. After Thorne's death in 1532, copies of these manuscripts remained in the hands of a merchant friend of his, one Emanuel Lucar, who in time transmitted them to his son Cyprian Lucar; and in 1577 Cyprian Lucar lent them to John Dee.[2] The latter was therefore in possession of the then unpublished writings of Robert Thorne. Dee's copies still exist in the Cotton collection, slightly mutilated by fire.[3] It must be said that they are of Elizabethan date and are not the transcripts made in 1527. The relevant passage for our purpose, stating that the elder Thorne and Hugh Elyot discovered Newfoundland, has been reproduced above.[4] No date is therein allotted to the discovery. Neither is it dated in the other MS. copy preserved in Lansdowne MSS. 100, ff. 65–80 b, nor in the printed versions of Richard Hakluyt. Dee's copyist was somewhat careless; in two instances he has omitted a whole line of the matter, as may be seen by comparing him with Hakluyt, who worked from

[1] No. 12, John Dee's statements.

[2] Cotton MSS., Vitellius C vii, f. 344, letter from Cyprian Lucar to Dee.

[3] *Ibid.* ff. 329–345.

[4] No. 13, Robert Thorne's statement.

a different manuscript. Hakluyt's omission of the date, in printing Thorne in the *Divers Voyages* of 1582, may be due to some prepossession of his own. As will be shown, he did take some liberties with his material, particularly in the matter of dates. As for the Lansdowne copyist, he may have based his text on one of those already mentioned; its spelling is not in the style of 1527. Thus there remains a bare chance that in the original manuscript given by Lucar to Dee, and now lost, the date 1494 occurred. Unless we hypothecate its presence we must conclude that Dee invented it, for it is evident that he had no other source of information. The younger Thorne, for example, does not mention his father's christian name—he alludes to the discoverer as "my father"; and Dee does not know the elder Thorne's name—he gives him as "Mr Robert Thorn his father." Yet why should Dee have gone out of his way to invent a date upon which nothing serious depended?

I believe, for the reasons given above, that it is just possible that the younger Thorne declared his father and Hugh Elyot to have discovered America in 1494. I do not believe that it was a well-founded assertion. Chronology was not Thorne's strong point. In his manuscript, as we have it in the Cotton copy, he stated that the first Portuguese voyage to Calicut occurred in 1487, and the first Spanish voyage to the West Indies in 1494. Hakluyt quietly corrected these dates to 1497 and 1492 respectively in his printed versions; and if he had had his own reasons for distrusting 1494 as the date of the Thorne and Elyot discovery he would certainly have omitted it. There are obvious reasons for distrust. The thing is entirely uncorroborated by the numerous persons who were interested in North America three years later: not one of them appears to have heard of it. Pedro de Ayala, indeed, whom we have already seen stating that there were Bristol expeditions about 1494, implied clearly enough that they had not discovered anything.[1] Again, Henry VII could hardly have issued a patent to John Cabot in the terms contained in that of 1496[2] if some other men had only recently found what John Cabot was proposing to seek. Finally, the younger Thorne was not a first-hand witness, since he was born in 1492. It may be that, either deliberately or unconsciously falsifying the record, he pushed Columbus forward to 1494 and his own father back to the same year; and Hakluyt, who knew the correct date for Columbus, and had read the Cabot patent,[3] felt justified in correcting the one false date and omitting the other. Hakluyt, by the way, modernized

[1] No. 33, De Ayala's letter, 1498. This, of course, was not known to Hakluyt.

[2] Described below.

[3] He prints it in *Divers Voyages*.

the spelling of Thorne's manuscripts and altered the phraseology in numerous places.

Here then the strongest evidence for a 1494 discovery must be held, in my opinion, to break down. But we are left with something, namely that the elder Robert Thorne and Hugh Elyot were concerned in the veritable discovery. Our informant, even if he manipulated the date, is hardly likely to have concocted the whole thing, especially as he seems to attach no great importance to it, and touches upon it merely in an allusive manner. There is, therefore, a possible connexion of Thorne and Elyot with John Cabot; but we may leave that for the present. There is another hint of 1494 to consider.

Some time before 1829 an archivist named Craven Ord made a copy of a manuscript Household Book of Henry VII which he found among the records of the Exchequer. His transcript, purchased in 1829 for the British Museum and now catalogued as Add. MS. 7099, contains a number of important entries about the voyages of John Cabot and his successors from 1497 onwards.[1] The first of them is under date Aug. 10, 1497, "To hym that founde the new Isle, £10". The payment was actually made to Cabot, although his name is not mentioned. Now to this entry Ord appended a curious note of his own: "Newfoundland, I suppose, it had been discovered about three years before". That gives 1494 as the date of the original discovery. What made Craven Ord think that? It is possible that he had it from the 1589 edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, which prints a statement, drawn from a map since lost but evidently similar to that now known as the Paris Map, that John Cabot and his son found the new land in June, 1494.[2] But if that were so we might expect Ord to mention that Cabot was the discoverer, whereas in fact he nowhere names Cabot in his annotations. It is possible again that Ord had seen John Dee's map in the Cotton collection. But that also, whilst giving Thorne and Elyot as the pioneers of 1494, states that Cabot was the commander of 1497. There remains a third possibility. Ord made his transcript from a Household Book which has since disappeared and which subsequent search at the Record Office has failed to trace. He may at the same time have seen another document, now likewise unknown, which gave him the date 1494.[3] But the supposition is so unsubstantiated that

[1] Nos. 23 and 44, Payments to explorers by Henry VII.

[2] In his second edition (1600), Hakluyt altered the date to 1497. The present Paris Map was discovered only in 1843—too late to have yielded information to Ord.

[3] The document transcribed by Ord covers the year 1494 but contains no entries about a discovery under that date or any other before 1497.

his note must be held to carry no serious importance as a piece of independent evidence. It is far less weighty than, for example, Rawdon Brown's statement on John Cabot's English origin. My own impression remains that all these obscure hints are inadequate to prove more than at best an unsuccessful voyage in 1494, and that the true date of the finding of North America remains unshaken as 1497.

Henceforward, however, we enter upon much firmer ground. On March 28, 1496, the Spanish sovereigns (Ferdinand and Isabella) addressed a despatch to Ruy Gonzales de Puebla, their ambassador at the court of Henry VII.[1] In it they referred to a letter of his, not preserved, in which he had reported the arrival of "one like Columbus", who was seeking to induce Henry VII to undertake a project like that of the Indies, although without prejudice to Spain and Portugal. The Spanish sovereigns were in a captious mood, and remarked that if Henry kept the same faith with the adventurer as he had with them the Indies would be well rid of the man, or, in other words, that nothing would come of it. They went on to say that they believed the plan to be a French device to distract Henry's attention from European affairs. De Puebla was therefore to be on his guard to prevent mischief. Finally, he was instructed that the time was not fitting to conclude any agreement with England on the matter, and that indeed nothing could be concluded without prejudice to Spain and Portugal.

This letter provides the only clue to the diplomatic moves that preceded the Cabot undertaking. De Puebla's despatch, to which it was a reply, must have been of some weeks' earlier date, for communication between England and Spain was at that time very slow in winter. It seems, therefore, that Henry VII had foreseen an objection to the project on the part of his Spanish friends, and had talked of the matter to their ambassador before granting Cabot his patent, whose date is March 5. The proviso that the thing is to be without prejudice to Spanish rights can only point to some such explanation by Henry. What De Puebla had answered we cannot tell. From time to time he received gifts of money from Henry, and he was known to be a covetous and corruptible man. His own royal employers were dissatisfied with him and suspected that he betrayed their interests. What he ought to have said, from the Spanish point of view, is clearly implied in the letter, namely that any new adventure "of the Indies" was inadmissible since Spain and Portugal between them claimed a monopoly. That was the interpretation already being attached to the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, if not to the papal bulls of the previous

[1] No. 14, The Spanish sovereigns to De Puebla.

year. But Henry evidently had hopes of getting an English interest recognized by some similar treaty, a proposal to which the closing sentences of the letter refer. The allusion to the French is very obscure. It may have been a guess on the part of Ferdinand, or it may be based on definite information. It is not impossible that Cabot had tried in France for better terms than Henry would grant him, just as Columbus had sought to play off England, Portugal and Spain against one another. Charles VIII, however, was deeply engaged in his Italian ambitions, and had no incentive to be drawn into any new diplomatic difficulties.

The oceanic position in 1495–6 should be considered. Portugal had discovered the Cape of Good Hope but had not yet sent out an expedition to cross the Indian Ocean and reach Asia. Spain had discovered part of the Antilles, which she asserted were the Asiatic archipelago (Columbus identified Hayti with Cipango); but the Spaniards had not sighted the main continent and could not say exactly where it was. Cabot had read his Marco Polo, which is explicit on the wealth and civilization of Cipango and on the regular traffic of Chinese shipping in the archipelago. He was quite able to point out to Henry that the reported Spanish discoveries did not coincide with these descriptions, and that there was no proof that the Spaniards had reached the true Indies at all. Yet the Peninsular powers were evidently claiming in advance of discovery a prescriptive right to everything and had announced the meridian which should delimit their spheres to the exclusion of everyone else. Henry showed plainly that he did not recognize prescriptive rights unless he should be given a share of them. He proposed to negotiate, and without waiting for an answer set about staking his own claim on the principle of *beati possidentes*.

March 5, 1496, is the date of the formal conclusion of the agreement between John Cabot and the king expressed in the letters patent. It is important to emphasize the fact that, as with all the patents with which we shall have to deal, there had been much preliminary discussion. The petitioner put forward his proposals, they were criticized first in principle by the king or his ministers, and then in detail by the Chancery officials. There was drafting and correcting of drafts, and haggling over point after point. The result was the patent as we have it, every line of which had been debated as closely as a bill in Parliament. So much we know from the mass of such records that survives. The patent is therefore a first-class testimony to what the parties undertook to do. It means exactly what it says, no more and no less, its every phrase is carefully weighed, and there are no ambiguities that professional skill can avoid. It is worth while to

make an effort at close interpretation and the extraction of every ounce of evidence it will yield.

The patent[1] conferred upon John Cabot, his sons Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio, and their heirs and deputies, permission to sail under the English flag with five ships and the proper crews "to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea"; to discover in *any* part of the world any heathen islands or countries hitherto unknown to Christians; to hoist the flag in any such discoveries, and to conquer and occupy in the king's name as great a part of them as might be possible. So much concerns the scope of the grant. If it is interpreted strictly and literally, as was the intention of its framers, it means that there was a limitation on the directions in which Cabot might sail from England. He might go to the east, north or west, but not to the south. South of what? Obviously, of England. If any question should arise, the lawyers would hold that he had overstepped his licence if he had sailed across the ocean to a landfall in any latitude south of those covered by the English realm. But, having crossed the ocean under the above limitation, he might discover infidel lands unknown to Christians in any part of the world. There is an apparent but not a real contradiction. Again reading the patent as it was meant to be read, we see that if Cabot discovered a new coast by a voyage made not southwards of England's latitude, he was not precluded from following his new coast whithersoever it might lead him, even to the tropics, provided it was always territory hitherto unknown. If we fit this to what we know independently of the Cabot-Bristol ideas, of the Norsemen's Markland etc., stretching well to the north of English latitudes but constituting the mainland of Asia and extending southwards to the tropical spice-regions, we realize what Henry VII was prepared to sanction. He would respect the Spanish claim to monopoly of westward navigation within the Atlantic belt already covered by Columbus, and as far as the islands found by Columbus, but no farther. Cabot was to outflank the Spaniards by crossing northward of their waters, finding the continent, and following its coast wherever it went, since it must manifestly lie beyond and not this side of the Spanish discoveries.

Here we have very nearly the principles that England has defended as a colonizing power throughout her modern history. Free navigation of all the high seas is not yet insisted on, but freedom to exploit any region not effectively occupied by any other Christian country is clearly laid down. There is also in the patent another principle which has been very little talked about but was long acted upon. It is that a Christian power

[1] No. 16, The first letters patent to John Cabot.

is *ipso facto* in a state of war with all infidels. That is the justification of the licence to "conquer, occupy and possess". It was a legal axiom as late as the seventeenth century, and was invoked by counsel in an important case concerning the Earl of Carlisle's West Indian patent in 1647. It is the moral basis of all the early empire-building of the European peoples. Returning to the general effect of the grant, we see that it constitutes a denial of the claim to monopoly that Spain and Portugal were already seeking to formulate.

The financial terms are next dealt with. Cabot and his sons and their heirs and deputies were to be exempt from all payment of customs on goods brought back from the regions discovered by them, but they were to pay the king one-fifth of the net profits of every voyage. The significance of the clause lies in the strict interpretation of the word customs, which was not by any means the equivalent of all import duties. Those duties were of two kinds, the customs and the subsidy, the former a fixed and traditional amount, and the latter a levy newly granted by Parliament at the commencement of every reign. Under Henry VII there were special rates for certain goods such as wool, hides, tin and wines, which were not likely at the outset to be brought from Asiatic lands, but on all other goods a subsidy of one shilling in the pound value was payable by native Englishmen and foreigners alike, whilst foreigners alone paid in addition a custom of threepence in the pound. The Cabots were not exempted from the subsidy, and their concession therefore amounted to one-fifth of the import duties normally payable, which was not particularly generous. Its effect was to place them in the same position as Englishmen as regarded imports alone, and nothing was said about exports, upon which the duties were also payable. In return for this they were to yield up one-fifth of all their clear profits. When we remember that the Bristol merchants working with Cabot were in any case exempt from the customs, and that any goods brought home would certainly have been entered in their names, we see that the king was giving up virtually nothing and was making sure of a revenue in return.

The real reward to Cabot lay in the monopoly conferred by the patent. The king forbade all his subjects, on pain of loss of ship and goods, to resort to any of the newly discovered places without the licence of the grantees. If a lucrative trade should be created, the Cabots would thus be able to keep it in their own hands or to levy royalties upon others engaging in it. Two points should be noted: the monopoly was perpetual; and it was to apply only to the places actually discovered by the grantees. If Cabot should discover only a portion of the western lands it would be

The Atlantic as shown in the Map of Gio, Matteo Contarini, 1506

quite open to the king without any breach of faith to issue patents to other parties for further discovery, and the lands so revealed would not be included in the Cabot monopoly. There is no clause by which the king binds himself not to licence other discoverers. We may be pretty sure that Cabot, under the legal advice he must have had in moving for his grant, would have asked for such a clause, and that it was refused. Subsequent transactions of 1501 and 1502 confirm the impression that it was Henry's policy to promote as many and varied enterprises as possible. The Portuguese kings had done the like with their multiplicity of limited grants for the African coasts and Atlantic islands.

Another limitation is of a different kind. The importers of goods from the new lands under the Cabot grant are bound to bring their vessels only into the port of Bristol. Here we see the influence of the Bristol merchants who were providing the funds for the enterprise and were securing that their town should be the entrepôt of the hoped-for spice trade. Southampton, as the monopolist of the spices brought by the old Mediterranean route, was then the second port in the kingdom, with customs receipts not falling very far short of those of London. Bristol had a trade only one-seventh as valuable as that of Southampton,[1] but their positions would quickly be reversed if the oceanic spice-route should supersede the overland route. It was a prospect worth working for. This leads us to a final question. Why was the grant made to John Cabot and not in the first instance to the Bristol men who stand behind him in the guise of his "deputies"? One reason may be that he understood the spice trade from personal experience. But a more weighty suggestion is that he had geographical knowledge not shared by any Englishman. We can deduce from his own declarations that he had studied Marco Polo and Ptolemy and the classical writers summarized in d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*. None of these works, so far as is now known, were accessible in English, and the Bristol voyage of 1480 suggests that the merchants who promoted it were merely in search of an Atlantic island, without any conception of a spice trade with Cathay. That conception is so obvious to us that it is difficult to realize how revolutionary it must have seemed to minds encountering it for the first time. But the prestige accruing to its earliest demonstrator in England must be held to account for the granting of the prospective monopoly to a poor and obscure foreigner like John Cabot.

It is necessary to be on our guard against exaggerating the importance

[1] An inference from a combination of the detailed customs returns printed in G. Schanz, *Englische Handelspolitik gegen Ende des Mittelalters*, Leipzig, 1881, II, pp. 37–156.

attributed to the project. Henry VII personally took a great interest in it, as he told the Spanish ambassador.[1] But his interest was largely intellectual, and he certainly did not make the undertaking a first-class item of the national policy. He spent very little money on it—small gratuities and pensions to Cabot and other leaders, and a few loans to merchants, probably not exceeding £300 from first to last. A border campaign against the Scots or a court entertainment with a diplomatic object cost infinitely more than that. Almost the whole financial risk was borne by a group of merchants, and it was high in proportion to their resources. Henry looked on benevolently and gave diplomatic support. But his belief in success was about equal to that of a man who takes a ticket in a sweepstake. So far as the immediate outcome was concerned his judgment was justified. British expansion began as a trickle, not as a flood.

The patent granted in March, 1496, did not lead to a discovery in that year. Perhaps there was a voyage which failed of success. More probably Henry took second thought and waited for Spain to state its objections. If that was so, there is no surviving trace of the negotiations, and the complaint was ineffective. In 1497 Henry allowed the project to go forward.

[1] No. 33, De Ayala to the Spanish sovereigns.

CHAPTER IV

THE VOYAGE OF 1497

THE nature of the evidence renders it impossible to give an unqualified narrative of John Cabot's expeditions. So many of the facts rest upon testimony that is ambiguous or otherwise liable to challenge, and so many more are not explicitly avouched but rest upon deduction from other facts, that the narrative can be established only step by step and in combination with documentary criticism. Moreover, there are certain points which are reasonably probable but not fully proved. They are worth considering, both for completeness and as aids to future research; for it is always possible that some fresh material may come to light whose value might pass unrecognized if its finder were not aware of a theory to be confirmed or overthrown. In constructing this mosaic of criticism, fact, warrantable inference, and mere suggestion it is necessary to be on one's guard against confusion of thought. I am endeavouring to base inference only on facts and not to evolve pseudo-fact from assumptions. But the path is perilous and stumbling probable, and I ask the reader to follow me with vigilance. This method of dialectic and challenge is the only means of elucidating the great story of the European discoveries across the oceans. It has already accomplished much, as one may see by comparing the established knowledge of to-day with that of fifty years ago. It has still much to accomplish.

The story of the voyage of 1497 rests upon three primary statements, two of which are detailed reports by contemporary observers, and upon a number of minor testimonies, some unquestionably authentic and others not, which contribute additions to the main account. The texts are printed in this volume and should be independently read and weighed.

In a Bristol chronicle known as the Fust MS.[1] there occurred a brief but important statement. It recorded that in the civic year 1496–7 (Sept. 15–Sept. 14) the merchants of Bristol found the land of America on St John the Baptist's day (June 24); and that they sailed in the ship *Matthew* from Bristol on May 2, and returned to that port on August 6. Here is the only authority for the name of the ship and for the exact dates of the voyage, May 2–August 6, 1497. This Chronicle, which recorded national events and the local affairs of Bristol, extended from 1217 "untill the present yeere 1565". It was written by one Maurice Toby at the latter date, and came afterwards into the possession of Sir Francis

[1] No. 17, Maurice Toby's account of the 1497 voyage.

Fust. In 1860 it was accidentally burnt, but a transcript of the above passage had previously been made, and was printed in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed. vol. IV, p. 350 (1876). Its authenticity has been called in question. Bristol manuscripts in general are suspect, owing to the fact that several such documents were mischievously forged by the poet Chatterton and long accepted as genuine; and since the original of this one is destroyed, it cannot be critically examined. But its statements are corroborated by the facts that Henry VII gave a reward "to him that found the new isle" on August 10,[1] which fits closely with the return to Bristol on August 6; and that there was actually a ship named the *Matthew* belonging to Bristol only a few years later.[2] Neither of these circumstances could have been known to Chatterton in the eighteenth century. A contemporary letter-writer also stated on August 23, 1497, that the voyage had occupied three months; and this evidence likewise did not come to light until 1837. No other sixteenth-century authority save this chronicle gives the duration of the voyage; and the chronicle gives it correctly. Again, exception has been raised to the phrase "the land of America" occurring in an entry which purports to have been composed in 1497, since the word "America" was not coined until several years after that date. But this is to misunderstand the method of the sixteenth-century chroniclers. The chronicle was a literary form into which these writers cast their material, a form which read as a succession of entries compiled year by year. But it was merely a form, and editors did not hesitate to incorporate later knowledge when working up contemporary material. We find both Stow and Hakluyt doing so in dealing with chronicle matter in extracts quoted in this book.[3] Maurice Toby therefore quite naturally used the word America, for he was writing in 1565, but that yields no presumption that he was not drawing his facts from a genuine contemporary source which may not have been in chronicle form at all. Finally, if this statement had been concocted by Toby in the sixteenth century or by Chatterton in the eighteenth, it is fairly certain that the delinquent would have attributed the discovery to Sebastian Cabot and not to some unnamed "merchants of Bristol". For, in the one century as in the other, Sebastian was generally believed to have been both a Bristol-born worthy and the finder of North America. There is really no case against the Fust MS., and its credentials are good.

Detailed reports on the 1497 voyage are furnished by the letters of Lorenzo Pasqualigo and Raimondo de Raimondi de Soncino.[4] Pasqualigo

[1] No. 23, Payments to explorers.

[2] No. 18, The *Matthew* of Bristol in 1503–4.

[3] See Nos. 30 and 31.

[4] Nos. 20 and 22.

wrote from London to his brothers at Venice on August 23, a fortnight after the return of John Cabot. He is the earliest witness to mention the explorer by name, and as a fellow-countryman he was interested in the venture and took pains to gather exact particulars. Yet his interest is that of an onlooker without a personal stake, and that renders his evidence the more trustworthy. The letter is terse and to the point, and encourages belief in its writer's accuracy. Soncino's letter is dated December 18 and addressed to the Duke of Milan, whose ambassador the writer was in this country. It is also written from the standpoint of the intelligent but disinterested onlooker, and its faint tone of irony is some guarantee against any enthusiastic exaggeration of the facts its author has gathered. Soncino had made himself personally acquainted with John Cabot and at least one of his crew, and had collected and sifted information from more than one source. His phraseology is in places obscure, but in essentials his testimony bears the same genuine stamp as that of Pasqualigo, with the added advantage of being fuller. On many points they corroborate one another, and on none are they in contradiction.

An earlier letter to the Duke of Milan, dated August 24, was formerly attributed to Soncino but cannot have been written by him, since he was not in London and had landed at Dover only on the previous day.[1] It is short and inexact, and what true information it contains is to be found in better authenticated documents. The rest is mere rumour, uncritically repeated. It is possible that Soncino's despatch of December 18 was written in response to a request for fuller information than this letter furnished.

Pedro de Ayala was a temporary Spanish ambassador who came to England in 1498. On July 25 of that year he wrote a despatch chiefly devoted to the second expedition of John Cabot, but containing some statements about the first. De Ayala was a hostile observer who remonstrated with the king on the whole undertaking, and some of his remarks are biassed; but he furnishes some probably true details not found elsewhere and had evidently taken pains to collect information. Another document of the same date was formerly believed to have been written by the permanent ambassador De Puebla, but is now proved to be an extract made in Spain from De Ayala's letter, and thus to possess no independent value.[2]

The Paris Map discovered in 1843 provides a puzzling and somewhat dubious piece of evidence. It is a large engraved map of the world

[1] No. 21, and footnote.

[2] See above, p. 140. The text is in Harrisse's *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1896), pp. 395–6.

printed in 1544 probably (on typographical considerations) in the Low Countries. To various parts of it are attached twenty-two legends, separately printed and pasted on, describing various regions of the world. The eighth legend is so placed as to refer most nearly to Cape Breton Island.[1] It states that this land was discovered by John Cabot the Venetian, and by Sebastian his son, on June 24, 1494, at five in the morning; and that they named a large island in the vicinity the Island of Saint John, because it was discovered on that saint's day. The legend then proceeds to a description of the natives and their weapons, and of the fish, birds and beasts of the country. The question of the date need not trouble us here. As has been explained, it was most likely a printer's or copyist's error for 1497.[2] The doubt arises from the fact that we know nothing certain about the authorship of the statement, and consequently cannot tell whether it is authenticated at all. The legends are printed in both Spanish and Latin, and a critical examination has indicated that they were composed first in Spanish and afterwards translated into Latin, from which it seems likely that the whole was of Spanish origin. In 1544 Sebastian Cabot was Pilot-Major of Spain and responsible for the production of the authorized Spanish maps. Moreover, copies of this map were extant in England from the reign of Edward VI, and its authorship was attributed by contemporaries to Sebastian Cabot. These are indications that Sebastian had something to do with the original manuscript draft of the map itself, but they yield no proof that he wrote the legends (a distinct task), or that he ever saw them before publication. It is at least certain that as a resident in Spain he could not have corrected the printer's proofs in the Netherlands. Consequently the date June 24, the most interesting detail, has been considered not fully authenticated. It will be observed, however, that this date occurs also in Toby's Chronicle, where it is expressed in a different form, not as June 24, but as St John the Baptist's day. That looks like corroboration, but there is always the possibility that Toby copied it from an English example of the map. Certainty is unattainable, but to my mind the corroboration holds good. For if Toby had copied the date from the legend (which we have no proof that he saw) he would most likely have introduced the name of Cabot as well. I believe therefore that Maurice Toby got the date June 24 from a Bristol source, and that the author of the 1544 legend had it independently, perhaps from Sebastian Cabot, and that it is therefore reasonably well

[1] No. 19, Statement inscribed on the Paris Map.

[2] See No. 19, footnote. Another edition of the map, seen by Purchas in 1625, bore the date 1497.

substantiated. The references in the legend to the natives and their weapons represent knowledge gathered after 1497, for we know quite positively that John Cabot saw no natives on his first expedition.[1]

We have already noticed the claim made by the younger Robert Thorne that his father and Hugh Elyot were the discoverers of the New Found Land.[2] It has been shown that they are not likely to have performed that feat in 1494, and the incident remains undated. There is a possibility that this testimony relates to John Cabot's voyage of 1497. Thorne abstains from any reference to the Cabots, which may result from some family jealousy. Since he lived in Seville he certainly knew much about Sebastian Cabot, who was then an eminent citizen; and indeed he had invested a large sum of money in the Spanish expedition at whose head Sebastian had sailed from that port in 1526, a few months before the date of his writing.[3]

The extracts quoted by Hakluyt and Stow from a lost chronicle of Robert Fabyan, and the parallel account from an anonymous chronicle in the British Museum,[4] relate almost entirely to the voyage of 1498, but may be glanced at here for their allusions to John Cabot's maps and demonstrations of his original discovery. A number of administrative documents give absolutely reliable evidence on the gratuity and pension bestowed on the explorer after his return in 1497.[5] The "Islario" of Alonso de Santa Cruz, a manuscript completed by 1541,[6] is notable as containing the earliest recognition by a sixteenth century historian that John Cabot was the discoverer, an honour which was, after the reign of Henry VII, commonly attributed to Sebastian. Lastly, among the minor evidence, there should be noted a map drawn by Michael Lok and printed in Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages* of 1582, which bears a statement that John Cabot discovered the Cape Breton coast in 1497. The "John" Cabot (in place of Sebastian) and the date 1497 are both unusually correct for the time of production, and they raise an unsolved question whether Michael Lok had any source of information now unknown to us, or whether he copied from a version of the Paris Map in which the misprinted date had been set right. Probably the latter is the answer. The way is now clear for some attempt at a narrative of John Cabot's first voyage.

[1] The whole problem of the Paris Map is reviewed in *Cabot Bibliography*, by G. P. Winship, pp. 13–26. It is a matter which has occasioned much controversy. I cannot find that the corroboration afforded by Maurice Toby has hitherto been brought into the discussion.

[2] See above, p. 150.

[3] Harrissee (1896), p. 185, etc.

[4] Nos. 29, 30 and 31.

[5] Nos. 23–7.

[6] No. 35.

In the spring of 1497 Cabot was at length in a position to cross the ocean and seek Cathay. He had his patent signed and sealed, permission from the king to make a start in spite of Spanish objections, and the financial support of the Bristol merchants. There was no state expenditure on the enterprise, as there had been on that of Columbus. Private funds had to provide everything, and it was prudent to make a cheap preliminary trip for the purpose of establishing the course to the Asiatic landfall and reconnoitring any unforeseen dangers that might imperil a trading fleet. That was the nature of the 1497 voyage as it appeared to contemporaries. The important expedition was that of 1498; its precursor was a mere reconnaissance. Instead of sailing as Columbus had done, with three ships and large crews able to take care of themselves in a hostile land, Cabot set out with the minimum equipment requisite to meet the dangers of the sea; for he intended but to look and to turn away.

His ship, according to Toby's Chronicle, was the *Matthew*, and there is no reason to doubt the statement. There is no Bristol customs ledger surviving for 1497, wherein we might look for an entry containing the name. The nearest such records now available are the books for 1492–3 on the one side, and for 1503–4 on the other. The former yields no mention of any ship called the *Matthew*, and it is a fair assumption that no such vessel belonged to Bristol in the year it covers. But the book of 1503–4 (Sept.–Sept.) contains five entries of "navicula vocata le Mathewe de Bristow".[1] On December 20, 1503, she sailed for Ireland with a mixed cargo belonging to Hugh Elyot. On May 4, 1504, she returned to Bristol from Ireland. On June 13 she sailed for Bordeaux, and on August 12 returned from that port. On August 28 she sailed for Spain, and had not returned when the book closed at the end of September. There is no further detailed record for the rest of Henry VII's reign. The *Matthew* therefore existed as a Bristol ship in 1503 and not in 1493. She was probably nearly new in 1497. The term "navicula" generally meant a vessel of medium size, smaller than a "navis", but larger than a "batella". It was probably what the Elizabethans called a bark, a small, fully rigged, decked craft suitable for ocean work, whereas the "batella" was an open sailing-boat chiefly used for coasting voyages. The *Matthew* could be navigated with a small crew.

She carried in 1497 eighteen persons, according to Raimondo de Soncino. The number comprised John Cabot himself, possibly his son Sebastian (a boy not much more than thirteen years old),[2] a Genoese

[1] No. 18, The *Matthew* of Bristol.

[2] See his own statements of his age, above, p. 142.

barber-surgeon, a Burgundian of unspecified vocation, certain Bristol merchants (their number unknown), and perhaps a dozen English sailors. The participation of Sebastian Cabot is attested solely by the legend on the Paris Map, which, in this particular, very likely emanated from Sebastian himself. We are not obliged to believe it. The statement may be mere vainglory; but there is nothing impossible in it. Boys commonly went to sea at that age in the old days. The great Dutchman de Ruyter related that he made his first transatlantic voyage at the age of ten. The fact that none of the contemporary witnesses mentions Sebastian is not fatal to his claim. His father did not take him on to London after his return, but left the whole family at Bristol.[1] The Genoese and the Burgundian are both mentioned by Soncino, who had questioned them about the voyage. It is quite hopeless to identify them further. Some commentators have surmised that the so-called Burgundian was the Fleming Johan Ruysch, who certainly did sail in an English ship from Bristol to the new lands at some date before 1508.[2] But it is a mere guess, of the sort that does harm by confusing issues, for there were several later expeditions which Ruysch could have accompanied, and the details of his own map do not suggest that he knew much about the Cabot voyages. The presence of the Bristol merchants is expressly stated by Toby's Chronicle, which regards them as the leaders of the expedition. It is implied also by Soncino, who relates that, Cabot being poor and a foreigner, his story would not be believed were it not corroborated by his English companions; and that "the leading men in this enterprise are from Bristol, and great seamen". This hardly indicates illiterate sailors, whose testimony would carry little more weight than that of the foreigner himself; it points rather to sea-going merchants, who would easily be described as "great seamen" by an Italian cleric. Who were they? Referring to the list of contemporary Bristol men known to have been interested in discovery, we find it includes John Jay the younger, Robert Thorne the elder, Hugh Elyot, Richard Warde, Thomas Asshehurst and John Thomas. Jay was by this time an elderly man, but the others were active many years later, although they are all found in the customs ledgers of 1492–3 or earlier. Two names stand out especially, those of Thorne and Elyot, for the former's son has claimed that they were "the discoverers of the New Found Land". This statement alone might reasonably be taken to hint at participation in the voyage of 1497. But the further details given by the younger Thorne indicate a more prolonged expedition and agree better with what is known of that of 1498. At that

[1] No. 20, Pasqualigo's letter.

[2] See below, p. 221.

we must leave it. There were some Bristol merchants in the pioneer voyage, and Thorne and Elyot are more likely than any others we know of to have been of their number.

The *Matthew* sailed from Bristol on May 2, 1497. By the terms of the patent her commander might not cross the ocean in a southerly latitude, and according to his own account he "bore towards the north" after passing Ireland and then "after some days" sailed westwards with the north pole on his right hand. At length "having wandered for some time" he sighted the coast of a main continent at a distance of 700 leagues from England. The phrases quoted are from Soncino's letter, whilst the distance is given by Pasqualigo. They constitute the sum of the strictly contemporary information upon the course followed by Cabot in 1497, and they are unsatisfactorily vague. An additional item, recorded by Toby's Chronicle and the Paris Map, is that the outward passage endured until June 24, a period of fifty-four days; whilst the legend on the Paris Map apparently indicates that the Prima Vista or point first seen was part of Cape Breton. These scanty evidences are insufficient to permit of a confident description of Cabot's track, and there has been much controversy about the locality of his landfall. Some place it in Southern Labrador, some in Newfoundland, and some at Cape Breton. It is to be noted that if Cabot really went north after passing southern Ireland, and then steered due westwards for the remainder of his voyage, he must have come to the Labrador coast. But since he took fifty-four days for the passage, an average rate of about one-and-a-half miles an hour, it is evident that he did not enjoy a continuously favourable wind, and therefore that he did not follow a straight track; and thus the argument for a Labrador landfall, so far as it is based on the phrases quoted, is weakened. The "wandering for some time" may represent a considerable divergence from the westward course. For the last part of the journey also the ship would be set steadily to the southward by the Arctic current that flows down into the Atlantic from Davis Strait. We have, moreover, to bear in mind the terms of the contract. Cabot was not to sail to land southward of England. Cape Breton and most of Newfoundland are in the latitudes of the Bay of Biscay. If, therefore, Cabot had reached those regions he would have been tempted to misrepresent his course and place the latitudes higher than they really were. And this, as I shall show at a later stage, is very likely what he did. His assertion that he went north and then west, if truly reported by Soncino, was also meant for the ears of the Spanish ambassador, since it placed the proceedings comfortably within the limits sanctioned by Henry VII. The evidence for this view is

closely bound up with that bearing on the second voyage, and for that reason I am postponing its discussion, with a merely provisional statement at this stage that the landfall was probably south of the fiftieth parallel.

Some light may be thrown upon Cabot's voyage by the geographical facts which became known in later times. In the Elizabethan period the Newfoundland passage was frequently made by small fishing vessels whose sailing powers were comparable to those of the *Matthew*. A gentleman named Edward Haie, who accompanied Sir Humphrey Gilbert in 1583, collected full details about the navigation, and his remarks on the prevailing winds are as follows: "About this time of the year [June] the winds are commonly West towards the Newfoundland, keeping ordinarily within two points of West to the South or to the North, whereby the course thither falleth out to be long and tedious after June; which in March, April and May hath been performed out of England in 22 days or less".[1] The implication is that in the spring there was a greater likelihood of easterly winds than in the summer. A modern authority affords confirmation. After pointing out that the best sailing course across the North Atlantic is often the indirect one of going southwards to the region of the trade winds, he says: "there are, however, many circumstances under which this route can be made without the assistance of the trade winds, and they occur principally during the 40 or 50 days after the two equinoxes, periods in which N.E. winds are frequently found; so that vessels sailing then may shape their course at once".[2] These are general statements not to be taken as invariably holding good. It would seem from the length of Cabot's passage that he had only moderate luck with the wind. Two Elizabethan passages recorded by Hakluyt may be quoted. In 1594 the *Grace* of Bristol left that port on April 4 and reached Newfoundland on May 19—forty-six days; and in 1597 the *Hopewell* of London left Falmouth on April 28 and reached Newfoundland on May 20—twenty-three days. The latter instance confirms Edward Haie's remark, and the former is comparable to the experience of John Cabot.

The legend on the Paris Map asserts that when Cabot sighted the mainland he discovered on the same day a large island, which he named the island of St John in honour of that saint's day. Much ingenuity has been misspent in attempts to identify this island. It cannot be done in any way that will carry conviction. That the tradition was widely known is apparent from various St Johns that appear on subsequent maps. But all the early maps are so ill drawn that we cannot transfer their minor details

[1] Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, Maclehose edition, VIII, p. 34.

[2] Capt. A. B. Becher, *Navigation of the Atlantic Ocean* (5th edition), 1892, pp. 144–5.

with any confidence to a modern outline. Moreover, there is only one of them, that of Juan de la Cosa, which for this region records the Cabot discoveries and nothing else; and La Cosa shows no Island of St John. All the others bear names bestowed by later navigators, superposed upon the nomenclature of Cabot, or even completely ignoring it, and so we may not adduce them as evidence. Finally, we cannot be sure that what Cabot took to be an island was one in fact. It was extremely easy for explorers pressed for time to mistake a promontory for an island, especially on a coastline so broken and fogbound as that of Newfoundland or its vicinity. The sixteenth-century maps, when they do not show Newfoundland itself as part of the main continent, represent it as an archipelago composed of many separate units. The Paris Map of 1544 does so, and only after the lapse of a hundred years from the discovery does Newfoundland begin to assume its proper shape. Cabot's Island of St John, if indeed it is well authenticated, remains unidentified.

Of one thing Cabot was quite sure, that his landfall was on the mainland of Asia. He had more excuse for that belief than had Columbus for his identification of Hayti with Japan and of Cuba with the continent. For Columbus, like Cabot a student of Marco Polo, knew what to expect in tropical Asia—large cities, a civilized population and government, and a busy maritime trade; and what he found was different—tribes of naked savages under petty chiefs, no sign of urban civilization, no shipping other than dug-out canoes. It is no wonder that some of the Spaniards expressed their doubts from an early date. Cabot, on the other hand, made no claim to have reached the regions known to Marco Polo. He conceived that he was on the outlying north-east part of Asia, remote from the rich and populous country, but nevertheless continuous with it. When we remember the contact of the Bristol men with Iceland, and the stories probably gathered there about the Skraeling savages who had harassed the Norse pioneers of Vinland, we can realize that to Cabot all must have seemed in order. He had no reason to expect that Cathayan culture extended so far north.

He took formal possession by planting the flags of England and St Mark (the patron saint of Venice), and then sailed hurriedly along the coast, far enough to make sure that it trended south and west, and so to confirm his belief of its identity. Pasqualigo says he coasted 300 leagues. It must have been a guess founded on a rough dead-reckoning estimated amid unknown currents, stoppages by night, and the frequent changes of course which would be necessary to round promontories without altogether losing touch with the intervening bights. The time so occupied cannot

have been more than three weeks, and we shall see from Juan de la Cosa's map that the survey was very superficial. He landed here and there, but saw no inhabitants; nor could he have wished to, for he believed them to be the bloodthirsty savages who had fought with the Norsemen. Cabot, with one small ship and eighteen men as the sole repositories of a discovery that would shake the world, could afford to take no risks. His landings must have been anxious affairs, with lighted match or arrow in the string, eyes straining to pierce the green woods for a lurking ambush, and backward glances to the beach. The natives kept out of sight, but he knew they were there. He saw snares set for game, and trees notched or felled by primitive axes, and at one place he picked up some tool of bone or wood which looked like a fisherman's netting needle. Then, says Pasqualigo, "being in doubt he returned to his ship".

The weather was temperate, warmer, we may judge, than that of England, for the land seemed capable of producing silks and dyewoods. The North American summer was at its height.

The English seamen noted one thing worthy of remark, that the tides were slack and did not run as they do at home. In fact the maximum rise and fall on the eastern coast of Nova Scotia is only six feet, almost negligible when compared with that of the Bristol Channel. The Bristol men had also a professional eye for something else, which struck their imaginations perhaps more powerfully than the promised riches of Cathay. The waters of this new shore were alive with fish. "Infinite quantity of fish", says the Paris Map, "sturgeons, salmon, very large soles a yard long, and many other kinds of fish, and the greater number of them are called baccalaos", which means cod. That may be based on later experience, but Soncino heard much the same from Cabot himself: "the sea there is swarming with fish, which can be taken not only with the net, but in baskets let down with a stone, so that it sinks in the water. I have heard this Messer Zoane state as much". Perhaps the good parson was himself an angler, and wrote the basket story with a twinkling eye and a prescience that it would be a classic.

Before leaving the coast on the return passage the explorers saw two more islands, or supposed islands, but food was running short and they did not stay to examine them. A mistranslation of Pasqualigo's letter has been the cause of much puzzlement and has been mistakenly used to support reasonings upon the locality visited. The letter was first printed in English in Rawdon Brown's *Venetian Calendar* of 1864, which renders "E al tornar aldreto a visto do ixole" as "And on his return he saw two islands to starboard". This would support a theory of a voyage south-eastwards

down the Labrador coast, with a final turning away eastwards as the islands were sighted; and it is hard to reconcile with a homeward voyage north-eastwards up the coast of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, since the supposed islands would then have been seen on the port beam. Dr H. P. Biggar, however, has shown that the Italian phrase does not bear the alleged meaning, but is simply, "And on the way back he saw two islands",[1] which eliminates the above argument.

The homeward voyage began probably before the middle of July, although the exact date cannot be fixed. It was completed on August 6, according to Toby, when the *Matthew* sailed into Bristol with all her people safe and sound. The late Henry Harrisse devoted a chapter of his last book on the Cabots to proving that the landfall could not have been made as late as June 24.[2] He did not believe the statement on the Paris Map, and he overlooked its corroboration by Toby's Chronicle. He was inclined to think that the compiler of the map invented the date to account for an island being named St John, a name by that time well established. His chief argument was that a first discovery on June 24 would have left insufficient time for the coasting and the return voyage. He allowed thirty-four days as the minimum time necessary for the homeward passage, and so reduced the coasting period to little more than a week. The best reply to this reasoning is to quote some actual sixteenth-century records. In 1565 John Hawkins, returning from the West Indies, had soundings on the Newfoundland banks on St Bartholomew's eve (August 23), and sailed thence on the next day. In spite of four or five days of scanty wind he entered Padstow on September 20—a passage of twenty-seven days; his flagship, the *Jesus of Lubeck*, was in poor condition and could not be pressed. In 1594 the *Grace* of Bristol left Newfoundland on August 24 and entered Ilfracombe before September 17[3]—a passage of less than twenty-five days. In 1597 the *Hopewell* of London quitted Newfoundland on August 5 and was in English soundings on the 27th—twenty-two days.[4] If Cabot had quitted the eastern point of Newfoundland as late as July 12 his passage to Bristol by August 6 would have taken twenty-six days, and he would have had eighteen days for his inspection of a length of coastline that may or may not have covered 300 leagues.

[1] H. P. Biggar, *Voyages of the Cabots and of the Corte-Reals*, Paris, 1903, pp. 6–8.

[2] H. Harrisse, *John and Sebastian Cabot*, 1896, Ch. x.

[3] She reached Bristol on Sept. 24, but had stayed "a seven night" at Combe, to which must be added the time taken between Combe and Bristol. This gives an arrival at Combe before Sept. 17.

[4] The instances are all from Hakluyt.

The achievement is quite possible. We have to remember that the 300 leagues was a mere estimate, and that even so it is not Cabot's first-hand statement but that of Pasqualigo, who may have misrepresented him. Moreover, in making his claim to the amount of coastline traversed Cabot would certainly not have been tempted to underestimate, for it was his object to prove that he had not merely discovered an island, but a continuous continental shore that might be expected to reach to the tropics.

From Bristol, John Cabot pushed on at once to London, and some of his companions, the elusive merchants of Bristol, went with him. He saw the king by August 10, and His Majesty made him an immediate grant of £10 from the Privy Purse, pending the allotment of a permanent pension. The clerk, with the traditionary islands, St Brandan's and the rest, running in his mind, made the entry as "to him that found the new isle", which was by no means the way Cabot would have put it. A fortnight afterwards the unknown writer of a news-letter to the Duke of Milan had the same impression. The Venetian, he says, "has good skill in discovering new islands, and he has returned safe, and has found two very large and fertile new islands. He has also discovered the Seven Cities, 400 leagues from England, on the western passage".[1] This is poor stuff, and on the previous day Lorenzo Pasqualigo had written a much more accurate story.

After specifying the details already related, of the distance traversed, the duration of the voyage, and the signs of habitation, Pasqualigo states that the coast discovered is "the country of the Grand Khan", by whom he means the Mongol emperor described by Marco Polo. He says that Henry VII has given Cabot a reward and has promised him a fleet of ten ships with which to sail next spring, and the services of all the convicts in the jails to perform the hard labour of the expedition. (The Milanese correspondent of August 24 renders the king's intention as the provision of fifteen or twenty ships.) This indication of the settling of a definite plan within a fortnight of Cabot's arrival in London is interesting. So important a matter would need full consideration, and its early decision suggests that the plans had been drawn some time before, and that the voyage of 1497 was merely a part of the whole, a preliminary investigation to ascertain the course in readiness for the main expedition. Cabot, continues Pasqualigo on the 23rd, has already gone back to Bristol to see his wife and family, after a brief season as a lion in London: "He is called the Great Admiral, and vast honour is paid to him, and he goes dressed in silk; and these English run after him like mad, and indeed he can enlist as many of them as he pleases and a number of our rogues as well".

[1] No. 21, News sent to Milan, Aug. 24, 1497.

Before long Cabot was again in London, and we have the account of the project continued by Raimondo de Soncino on December 18. Soncino shows a more than superficial interest, and has asked questions in various quarters. He writes with an air of detached amusement and an ironical suspicion that the enthusiasm is being overdone. In his description of the voyage, already quoted, he remarks: "In going towards the East he [Cabot] passed far beyond the country of the Tanais". This is incomprehensible unless we remember that it was the discovery of eastern Asia that was believed to have been accomplished. Although the voyage had been westwards, Soncino was thinking on the old lines of approaching Asia eastwards.[1] "The country of the Tanais" was the region round Tana on the Black Sea, an Italian trading outpost, the river itself being the Don. The meaning is that a much more easterly part of Asia has been found. Soncino has listened to Cabot lecturing and demonstrating from a world-map and a globe which he has made. The map would be worth seeing, but it has disappeared. A ghost of it, however, lurks in the mappemonde of Juan de la Cosa, drawn in 1500 and now preserved at Madrid, which will be described in its place. The discovery, continues Soncino, has led to two plans of exploitation. One concerns the Newfoundland fishery: "These same English, his companions, say that they could bring so many fish that this kingdom would have no further need of Iceland, from which place there comes a very great quantity of the fish called stockfish". The other plan is Cabot's own, nothing less than the diversion of the spice trade from the Mediterranean: "But Messer Zoane has his mind set upon even greater things, because he proposes to keep along the coast from the place at which he touched, more and more towards the east [*sic* for west?], until he reaches an island called Cipango, situated in the equinoctial region, where he believes that all the spices of the world originate, as well as the jewels".

That sentence should be noted, for it is the clue to the second voyage.

At last we are in Marco Polo's veritable country, the Asia of "the equinoctial regions", within the tropics. Here is Marco's account of it: "Zipangu is an island in the eastern ocean, situated at the distance of

[1] Or his phrasing may have been influenced by the conception of the earth as a sphere floating stationary in the universe, with Jerusalem as the highest point on its upper surface. If one travelled continuously westward from Europe one would end by passing on the under surface of the sphere in a reversed direction to that of starting—i.e., eastwards as viewed from the starting-point.

about fifteen hundred miles from the mainland, or coast of Manji.[1] It is of considerable size; its inhabitants have fair complexions, are well made, and are civilized in their manners. Their religion is the worship of idols. They are independent of every foreign power, and governed only by their own kings. They have gold in the greatest abundance, its sources being inexhaustible, but as the king does not allow of its being exported, few merchants visit the country, nor is it frequented by shipping from other parts. To this circumstance we are to attribute the extraordinary richness of the sovereign's palace, according to what we are told by those who have access to the palace. The entire roof is covered with a plating of gold, in the same manner as we cover houses, or more properly churches, with lead. The ceilings of the halls are of the same precious metal; many of the apartments have small tables of pure gold, of considerable thickness, and the windows also have golden ornaments. So vast indeed are the riches of the palace, that it is impossible to convey an idea of them. In this island there are pearls also, in large quantities, of a red colour, round in shape, and of great size, equal in value to, or even exceeding, that of the white pearls.... It is to be understood that the sea in which the island of Zipangu is situated is called the Sea of Chin, and so extensive is this eastern sea, that according to the report of experienced [Chinese] pilots and mariners who frequent it, and to whom the truth must be known, it contains no fewer than seven thousand four hundred and forty islands, mostly inhabited. It is said that of the trees that grow in them there are none that do not yield a fragrant smell. They produce many spices and drugs, particularly lignum-aloes and pepper, in great abundance, both white and black".

There, allowing for the reduction of the size of this eastern sea in accordance with the fifteenth-century geography which expanded Asia and diminished the ocean, is the inspiration of Cabot. He might not sail directly south-west to Cipango, for that course would take him through the waters already discovered by Columbus; but he would approach it by following the continental coast, which could lead nowhere but to these spice-laden tropics. It was all quite sound, but for the unsuspected obstacle of America.

To return to Soncino, who gives details of Cabot's previous acquaintance with the spice trade at Mecca: "He [Cabot] tells all this in such a way, and makes everything so plain, that I also feel compelled to believe him. What is much more, His Majesty, who is wise and not prodigal, also gives

[1] Marco Polo grossly overstated the distance. He may have rendered Chinese *li* as "miles".

him some credence, because he is giving him a fairly good provision since his return, so Messer Zoane himself tells me. Before very long they say that His Majesty will equip some ships, and in addition he will give them all the malefactors, and they will go to that country and form a colony. By means of this they hope to make London a more important mart for spices than Alexandria". The tone is cool. His Majesty gives "some credence" and "a fairly good provision"—it was indeed not extravagant—and the reference to the spice market, from one Italian to another, could only have been written with tongue in cheek. The letter ends with good-natured gibes about the principalities, countships and bishoprics that are to fall to the plebeian pioneers—Cabot and his barber friend, and the poor friars who are eager to join.

The gratuity of £10 from the Privy Purse on August 10, 1497, was followed by the grant of a regular pension on December 13. The document which records it describes the explorer as "our well-beloved John Calbot of the parts of Venice",[1] and directs the Lord Chancellor to issue letters patent for the payment of £20 per annum to the grantee from the proceeds of the customs and subsidies collected at Bristol. The pension was to be paid during the king's pleasure in two annual instalments of £10 each at Michaelmas and Easter and was to commence from the Feast of the Annunciation last passed (March 25, 1497).[2] There was a hitch in the completion of this business, for the Customers of Bristol did not receive the necessary authorization to make the payment. On February 22, 1498, Cabot therefore obtained a privy seal warrant to the Exchequer, directing the preparation of two tallies annually to be delivered to him until further orders, which tallies he was to hand to the Customers in exchange for £10 apiece.[3] The Exchequer records show that the customs of Bristol were almost wholly allocated to various items of expenditure of this sort. The method made for efficient administration and was by no means the slipshod device that some have described it. It saved much transport of specie and gave a number of local people an interest in seeing that the duties were honestly collected; for had the Bristol revenue fallen off they would have gone short of their payments. Cabot duly received his first payment before Easter, 1498.[4] The further instalments will be found to provide some slight indication of the duration of his life. Whilst waiting, he had probably received a second gratuity from the king. The Privy Purse account for January 1, 1498, includes an entry: "To a Venysian

[1] There are other indications that Cabot was at this time anglicizing his name by the insertion of an 'l'. See No. 26.

[2] No. 24. [3] No. 25. [4] No. 26.

in reward £3. 6. 8", or five marks.[1] It is very likely that Cabot was the Venetian in question.

These grants were by no means over-generous. They would seem to represent rather less than the income upon which Cabot could maintain himself in the position he had now attained. His court attire and travelling expenses were items relatively much heavier than they would be to-day, and a man who held a prospective fortune in his grasp was expected to be openhanded.

[1] No. 23, Payments to explorers.

CHAPTER V

THE VOYAGE OF 1498

We now reach a crucial point in the story of the Cabot voyages. By direct contemporary evidence, well corroborated or otherwise demonstrably authentic, we know the motive and the intended course of John Cabot's second expedition. We have also some details of its personnel and shipping and of the circumstances of its start. But once it loses sight of the British Isles we know nothing positive of its adventures, and it is only by inference from indirect and confused testimonies that we can attain to a tentative explanation of what took place.

It is true that in nearly all[1] histories of the Cabots there are to be found much fuller and more positive accounts of the 1498 voyage than this chapter will provide. But I believe these accounts to be illegitimately arrived at by a misinterpretation of the evidence. Their method is to take the numerous narratives of Sebastian Cabot's North West voyage and to read them as applying to the expedition of John Cabot in 1498. By so doing a well rounded story can be built up, but to my mind it is unsound. Sebastian Cabot, as the reader may see from the testimonies collected under his name in this volume, describes a voyage commanded by himself, employing two ships, and directed to the Arctic seas for the purpose of finding a North West Passage to Cathay. The narratives are for the most part undated; although one, which is patently garbled and full of errors, assigns the date 1496 to the undertaking, whilst others declare that it took place in the closing years of Henry VII's reign. This lack of clarity about the date leaves it open to those who so desire to make Sebastian's accounts apply to 1498. But another circumstance is fatal to that argument. It is that Sebastian's recorded expedition was a search for a passage round the north of *America* through the Arctic ice. Now John Cabot, as we have seen, came home in 1497 announcing that he had found the outlying parts of *Asia*. That being granted, what would be the result of a successful push round the north of his new land? Obviously it would be a coasting of northern Asia and an eventual arrival by way of Scandinavia in the North Sea and on the eastern coast of Great Britain —an objectless tour for one who purposed to open a spice trade in the tropics. The cardinal fact is that in 1497–8 no one had any suspicion that the land across the Atlantic was a continent distinct from Asia and blocking

[1] The exception is Mr G. P. Winship's Introductory Essay in his *Cabot Bibliography*, London, 1900.

the way to Asia, and until the true nature of that opposite continent was recognized there could be no quest for a North West Passage. When Sebastian Cabot made his voyage the truth about America was recognized, and that alone is proof that his voyage was subsequent to 1498. Another obvious objection is that contemporary documents show John Cabot and not Sebastian to have been the commander in that year. This has been answered by the assumption that Sebastian was a deliberate liar who was seeking to appropriate his father's credit to himself. Sebastian, it may be granted, was not a truthful man and was ungenerous to his father. But he did not really claim his father's discovery—he merely ignored it and advertised his own; and in the legend on the Paris Map (if that work was of his inspiration) he did ascribe the voyage of 1497 to "John Cabot and Sebastian his son". I refrain from pressing here the point, which I hold established, that Sebastian was a mere schoolboy in 1497–8. To adduce that is unnecessary in view of what is said above of America and the North West Passage.

The reading of the Sebastian narratives as applying to John Cabot's voyages is the method employed in Harrisse's work of 1896, in G. E. Weare's *Cabot's Discovery of North America* (1897), and in C. R. Beazley's *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1898). These accounts differ in many important respects, but in this fundamental are alike. Mr G. P. Winship made the critical distinction of the Sebastian evidence in 1900. In 1903 Dr H. P. Biggar published his *Voyages of the Cabots and of the Corte-Reals*, wherein he constructed from the Sebastian evidence an account which made the 1498 voyage proceed by way of Greenland and Labrador round to the more temperate coasts of North America. His work is enriched by an encyclopaedic knowledge of the early maps of the new regions, a knowledge which he applies to a detailed elucidation of the track. But the maps (except La Cosa's) include material gathered from later voyages than those of John Cabot, and I believe that, like Sebastian's narratives, they cannot safely be applied to the problem of 1498. They may embody John Cabot evidence, but it is overlaid; and they are not even palimpsests, they are compounds inextricably mixed. It is with great regret that I differ from Dr Biggar. This book, as may be seen, owes much to his work. But in handling historical evidence it is necessary to follow one's own judgment whilst paying respect to that of others.

The acceptable evidence for 1498 is as follows: (i) the second letters patent granted to John Cabot; (ii) entries from a chronicle by Robert Fabyan, now lost, but quoted by Stow and by Hakluyt; (iii) an entry from an anonymous chronicle preserved in the British Museum; (iv) a

letter written by Pedro de Ayala on July 25, 1498; (v) a letter of Agostino de Spinula, June 20, 1498; (vi) two sentences in a letter of Pietro Pasqualigo, October 19, 1501; (vii) administrative documents on loans and gratuities to members of the expedition and on the payment of Cabot's pension; (viii) the Map of Juan de la Cosa, 1500; (ix) the Spanish patent granted to Hojeda in 1501.

The two chronicles bear a close resemblance to one another, and are evidently compiled from some common archetype. The anonymous chronicle in the British Museum[1] is a London civic record extending to 1509 and was probably cast into its present form shortly after that date. But the material used for the entry about the voyage was presumably written in 1498, since it records the start of the expedition and then says that "to the end of this present month" no further news had been received. It certainly reads as though the month indicated was September of 1498, the close of the civic year. The Fabyan Chronicle[2] is similar: "in this Mayor's time returned no tidings". Robert Fabyan was a London citizen who died in 1512. In 1516 an edition of his Chronicle was printed, but it extended only to 1485; a second edition in 1533 covered the reign of Henry VII without alluding to the Cabot voyages, but the additional matter was furnished by a later hand.[3] It is evident, however, that Fabyan himself had written an account of Henry VII's reign containing the Cabot matter, for this manuscript was in the possession of John Stow in 1580 and was copied, with variations, by him and by Hakluyt. The variations need explanation. It is almost certain that Fabyan referred to Cabot merely as "a Venetian", without naming him; for that is the phraseology of the British Museum chronicle that is so closely akin to the lost manuscript. Stow and Hakluyt amplified this from their own knowledge. Stow in 1580 called the explorer "Sebastian Gabato, a Genoa's sonne". Hakluyt, in his *Divers Voyages* of 1582, stuck to the original and spoke of "a Venetian" in his quotation, although he prefixed as a heading: "A Note of Sebastian Gabote's Voyage". In 1599–1600, in the second edition of his *Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt made another alteration; whilst keeping "Sebastian Gabote" in the heading, he changed the text to "one John Cabot, a Venetian". The whole is a lesson on the need for caution in accepting details from sixteenth-century editors, and the conclusion must be that the anonymous Chronicle is probably the most trustworthy text to follow. The second Fabyan entry, on the three savage men brought to England in the seventeenth year of the reign (1501–2), has no bearing on John Cabot's voyage.

[1] No. 29. [2] Nos. 30 and 31. [3] Harrisse, *J. and S. Cabot* (1896), p. 22.

The Chronicles agree that the expedition comprised four or five ships, and this is corroborated by the letters of Spinula and De Ayala, who each give five as the number. Three independent authorities, each writing without knowledge of the others, are thus in accord, and the five ships are an established fact. It constitutes a serious difficulty for those who would apply the Sebastian Cabot narratives to this voyage, since those accounts one and all agree that Sebastian took two vessels to the North West. Dr Biggar suggests that only one or two ships really belonged to the expedition, whilst the others were Iceland fishermen who merely left Bristol in company; but the chronicles imply that they were all bound for the new land, and so does De Ayala. The letter of Pietro Pasqualigo from Lisbon in 1501[1] is mainly a description of a Portuguese voyage and casts but the faintest sidelight on Cabot by its allusion to European articles found in the hands of American natives. The La Cosa Map and the Hojeda patent concern the locality of the discoveries.

We have already seen that the plans for John Cabot's second voyage were being discussed immediately after his return in 1497. The first record of active preparations is comprised in the second letters patent issued to him on February 3, 1498.[2] This document authorizes Cabot or his deputies to take six English ships, of a burden not exceeding 200 tons, for a voyage to "the land and isles" lately found by him, on payment of the rates of hire ordinarily paid by the Crown. He may also take with him all persons who will voluntarily join the venture. All officers and subjects of the king are enjoined to facilitate these arrangements, which may be carried out despite any statute or ordinance "made or to be made" to the contrary. Some slight acquaintance with Tudor maritime administration is necessary to an interpretation of this document. In the first place, it is not a basic grant of privileges, as was the patent of 1496. That patent still held good as the governing instrument of the undertaking, and was in no way superseded or cancelled. The second grant is a mere *ad hoc* commission arising out of a difficulty Cabot has met with in procuring suitable ships; and it enables him to "take" (evidently "impress") such ships at the king's rate. That rate was threepence per ton per week, as appears by numerous Navy papers of the Tudor period. The second paragraph granted leave to the king's subjects to accompany Cabot, any laws or orders to the contrary notwithstanding. It was necessitated by the general rule that subjects might not quit the country without permission, a rule commonly dormant but enforceable by proclamation in time of emergency. No such proclamation can be traced in February, 1498, but it is quite

[1] No. 34. [2] No. 28.

conceivable that one was contemplated in view of the disturbed situation arising from Perkin Warbeck's activities. The patent excepted the Cathay adventurers and acted as a common passport to them. Such is the tenor of the 1498 grant. The omission of the names of Cabot's sons has been commented upon in a previous chapter, as a possible indication that they were not old enough to perform administrative acts.[1]

The purpose of the voyage was that expressed in the letters of 1497, to follow the new coast to tropical latitudes and thence to discover the spice regions adjoining Cipango. There is no further mention of the convicts whom it was said the king had promised Cabot for the purpose of founding a colony; and we do not know if they actually sailed or not. A project for a colony would seem to be rather out of place in opening relations with the powerful princes who were supposed to rule over the regions sought for. It is possible that the settlement was intended to be on the coast found in 1497, where it would have been useful as a half-way depot at which goods from the spice islands could be collected and thence forwarded to England. This plan for a half-way post on a long route is noticeable in more than one Elizabethan scheme for trade with Cathay. If the convicts were employed there would have been no need to mention them in the patent of 1498; their passport would have been a different kind of document.[2]

The shipping was equipped at Bristol. According to the chronicles a large vessel was manned, equipped and victualled at the king's cost. The second patent does not promise any royal contribution, but that is no proof that the chroniclers are wrong; for it is concerned only with ships that Cabot and his deputies were to impress at their own expense, and no patent would have been necessary to enable the king to hire a ship. In addition there were three or four small ships laden by the merchants of London and Bristol. The Privy Purse entries give the names of three of these Londoners.[3] On March 22, 1498, Lancelot Thirkill of London received a loan of £20 "for his ship going towards the new Island", and a second note of the same date records the delivery of (apparently) another

[1] See above, p. 142. It should be noted that this commission, unlike the original grant of 1496, is written in English, so as to be intelligible to the merchants and ship-masters to whom Cabot would need to show it.

[2] In Warrants for Issues (E. 404. 84, Aug. 12, 17 Hen. VII) there is mention of a payment to one Dyvelyn, a King's officer-at-arms, for the conveyance of prisoners to Ireland, which may indicate that they were employed on colonizing work there. They would hardly have been sent from England to Ireland for trial.

[2] No. 23, Payments to explorers.

sum of £20 to the same man, "going towards the new Isle". On April 1st Thirkill and Thomas Bradley jointly received another loan or gift of £30, whilst John Carter, "going to the New Isle", was paid forty shillings "in reward". The inference is that all three proceeded on the voyage. Another person who is certainly known to have sailed was an Italian named Giovanni Antonio de Carbonariis, who was recorded on June 20 to have "left recently with five ships which His Majesty sent to discover new islands".[1] The Bristol merchants, as before, are unnamed, and we are left to guess that Thorne and Elyot may have been of their number. The cargoes consisted of "slight and gross merchandises, as coarse cloth, caps, laces, points and other trifles", which would have yielded a glorious profit if exchanged for an equal bulk of spices. The whole fleet, according to De Ayala, was provisioned for a year; and since he added that "they" hoped to be back by September, it may be that the provisioning was for a colony to remain in the new land.

The date of sailing is not precisely fixed. Fabyan's Chronicle says "in the beginning of May"; the anonymous Chronicle, "in the beginning of summer"; and Spinula, on June 20, "recently". We can regard May as the probable month. On July 25 Pedro de Ayala wrote some additional details.[2] The five ships, he says, ran into a storm after leaving Bristol, and one of them put into an Irish port in a damaged condition; but Cabot with the others continued on his way. In the ship that fell out there was "another Friar Buil", an allusion to a missionary who had accompanied Columbus. Coupling this remark with Soncino's statement that some Italian friars purposed going to the new land, we may guess (it is only a guess) that the man in question was the Giovanni Antonio of Spinula's letter. De Ayala's news contains the last positive information yet discovered about John Cabot's second expedition. The chroniclers have nothing further, save that no tidings had been heard by September. From that day in May or June when the crippled ship made port the Atlantic swallowed Cabot and all his men, and not one of them can be positively proved ever to have come home.

Yet there is presumptive evidence, cumulatively very powerful, that the expedition reached America and that some of its members returned. On October 19, 1501, Pietro Pasqualigo, Venetian ambassador at Lisbon and brother of the Lorenzo Pasqualigo of London, wrote of the voyage of Gaspar Corte-Real to North America.[3] One of his ships had just returned,

[1] No. 32, Letter of Agostino de Spinula.

[2] No. 33, De Ayala's letter.

[3] No. 34, Pietro Pasqualigo's letter.

and "these men have brought from there a piece of a broken gilt sword, which certainly seems to have been made in Italy. One of the [Indian] boys was wearing in his ears two silver rings which without doubt seem to have been made in Venice". Now, Pietro Pasqualigo had not heard of the Cabot expeditions, and thought his Portuguese friends were the first to cross the upper Atlantic. He believed, moreover, that the opposite coast was that of Asia, and the sword and rings confirmed that idea, since he could only suppose that they had gone eastward from Europe by the old trade routes to farthest Cathay. Nevertheless his statement is unconscious testimony to the presence of John Cabot on the American coast in 1498. For there was no other who could have given these articles to the natives, and we know he had not done so in 1497, since he saw not a soul on that occasion.

The world-map of Juan de la Cosa, compiled in 1500, shows an extensive coasting of North America by the English, at least from Cape Breton to Long Island, and probably much farther. They had noted many natural features and had bestowed names upon them. These explorers can have been none other than Cabot's men, and the ground covered is too large to have been merely the hasty reconnaissance of 1497. The La Cosa Map is good evidence for the presence of Cabot on the American seaboard in 1498. And since this record was known in Spain in 1500, it is obvious that someone survived to bring it home. We may say, therefore, on this reasoning alone, that part of the expedition returned.

Again, in June, 1501, the Spanish sovereigns issued a patent to the explorer Alonso de Hojeda, in which they referred twice to the fact that the English were making discoveries on the American coast.[1] This may of course have alluded only to the voyage of 1497, but the whole tenor of the document implies that the discoveries were much nearer to the tropical latitudes than Cabot could have gone on his first voyage. Hojeda himself was to make exploration of the Caribbean shores, and to set up marks of Spanish acquisition in order to warn off the English. The thing is very obscure, but it points to a lengthy American coasting voyage by Cabot in 1498, continued possibly into 1499. The information on which the grant is based is probably the same as that contained in the La Cosa Map.

Finally there are in English documents hints, not amounting to proof, of the return of the expedition. In 1897 there was discovered in the Westminster Chapter Archives a roll of the accounts of the Bristol customers for the years 1496–9.[2] In this document the officials record various pay-

[1] No. 36, Patent to Hojeda. [2] No. 27.

ments which they have been authorized to deduct from the sums handed in to the Exchequer. Among these items occurs the payment of £20 to John Cabot for the year Michaelmas, 1497, to Michaelmas, 1498, and of a further £20 for the year Michaelmas, 1498, to Michaelmas, 1499. In other words, Cabot's pension continued to be paid to September, 1499. We have already noticed the payment of £10 for the period Easter to Michaelmas, 1497, and the order given to the Exchequer for the issue of half-yearly tallies of £10 each thenceforward.[1] That order was evidently modified, for the Westminster roll shows the payment of a whole year's pension "in one tally" of £20 on each occasion. The phraseology does not prove that Cabot personally received the money; the tally is honoured "in the name of John Cabot (pro Johanne Caboot)". It has been argued nevertheless that the payment could only have been made to the grantee in person, and that Cabot must therefore have been in England in 1499, thus having returned from his second voyage. I have found a parallel case which shows that this argument is not good. On August 26, 1505, one Antony Spynell was a creditor of the Crown, and as he was "in the parts beyond the sea" by the king's command, it was ordered that payment should be made "unto his sufficient assign".[2] It is true that no such order on behalf of Cabot can be found, but that is no proof that none was issued, for a mere tithe of such documents has survived. The Westminster roll therefore does not prove that John Cabot was in England in 1499, but it does prove that he was not known to be dead on the date (whatever it was) between September, 1498, and September, 1499, on which the tally was honoured; for the pension would have ceased with his death. There is no trace of any further payment. A View of Account of the Bristol customers exists for the period Michaelmas to Easter, 1501–2,[3] and although it contains a number of such disbursements there is none in the name of John Cabot. Again, the evidence is not conclusive. If the record covered a full year without mention of Cabot we should be justified in assuming that he was dead. But his pension was being issued in single annual instalments, and may have fallen in the period Easter to Michaelmas, for which we have no record. There is but one other such document, again for a half-year, Michaelmas to Easter, 1503–4, and that also contains no mention of him.[4] But there is no proof that John Cabot was not alive

[1] See above, p. 174.

[2] Warrants for Issues, E 404, 85/81 (Aug. 26, 21 Hen. VII). A somewhat similar instance is that of Matthew Baker, who was sent on a royal errand beyond seas and had order for his money to be paid in advance of the proper time (E. 404, 86/25).

[3] E. 122, 20/14.

[4] E. 122, 20/12.

during all these years, and the common assumption that he died in 1499 has no sound basis. Sebastian Cabot's words, if we may believe him or his reporters, cast a little light on the date of his father's death. He declared more than once that it was immediately after that event that he placed his own project of the North West Passage before Henry VII. Now Sebastian's voyage, as I hope to show, took place at the close of the reign, and on April 3, 1505, he received a grant of a £10 annuity.[1] That date, at which he was at least twenty or twenty-one years of age, marks his entry into active affairs, and the grant to him may have coincided with the expiry of his father's pension. The general conclusion is that we have no positive proof: (1) that John Cabot personally survived his second voyage; (2) that he died in 1499; (3) that he was not living until 1504–5. It is unsatisfactory, but that is the best that can be made of the matter.

There was another of the adventurers of 1498 who was certainly in England three years later. This was Lancelot Thirkill, who was described in the Privy Purse account as going personally and with his ship to the New Found Land. He appears again in a document of June 6, 1501, as a debtor of the Crown, bound to discharge his obligation at Whitsuntide following.[2] Here at first sight is positive proof of the return of a member of the American expedition. But again there is an uncertainty, for Thirkill's ship may have been the vessel that abandoned the voyage and took refuge in an Irish port.

In spite of all these deficiencies in the English records, the inference from the La Cosa Map and the Hojeda patent is strongly in favour of the return of some part of the 1498 expedition with news of discoveries on the American coastline. The nature and extent of those discoveries have next to be investigated.

[1] No. 48, Pension to Sebastian Cabot.

[2] Add. MSS. 21480, f. 35 b.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISCOVERIES OF JOHN CABOT

In 1497 John Cabot, as we know from the contemporary letters, brought home a map delineating his discoveries of that year. In the voyage of 1498 he also made a map, which he or his companions likewise brought back to Europe. I have given grounds in the previous chapter for regarding this latter statement as probable, and in the following pages I hope to prove it more definitely. These maps are both lost, and the present problem is to reconstruct the material they contained and to arrive at some conclusion about the discoveries accomplished.

First it will be well to review the information already noticed, so far as it bears on the locality of the discoveries. In doing so, we should remember that there are two distinct questions involved for the voyage of 1497, that of the point of original landfall, and that of the general trend and extent of the coast that formed the main subject of Cabot's report. The first is really subsidiary to the second, but there has been a tendency to magnify it on account of its sentimental interest to the modern inhabitants of the places which can compete for the honour of having been the Prima Vista of North American exploration. The main object of our enquiry must be to identify the whole stretch of coastline that appeared to John Cabot as the outlying region of Cathay.

Lorenzo Pasqualigo wrote on August 23, 1497, that Cabot had sighted a mainland at a distance of 700 leagues from England and had followed its coast for 300 leagues, that the tides were markedly slack, and that on the return passage two islands had been seen but not examined in detail. On August 24 the unknown correspondent of the Duke of Milan stated that islands had been discovered 400 leagues west of England. On December 18 Raimondo de Soncino declared that Cabot had borne to the north after leaving England, had then turned westwards and wandered for some time, and had at length reached a mainland. The land was excellent and temperate, near its coasts there was a valuable fishing-ground, and its trend was such that by following it one would reach the tropical regions of eastern Asia. The legend on the Paris Map, printed half-a-century later and less certainly authentic, placed the landfall near Cape Breton Island. Its statement derives some support from corroboration of the date, June 24, by Toby's Chronicle, and it was very likely based on information obtained from Sebastian Cabot. Michael Lok's map, published in 1582, indicated the coast of Nova Scotia as the region

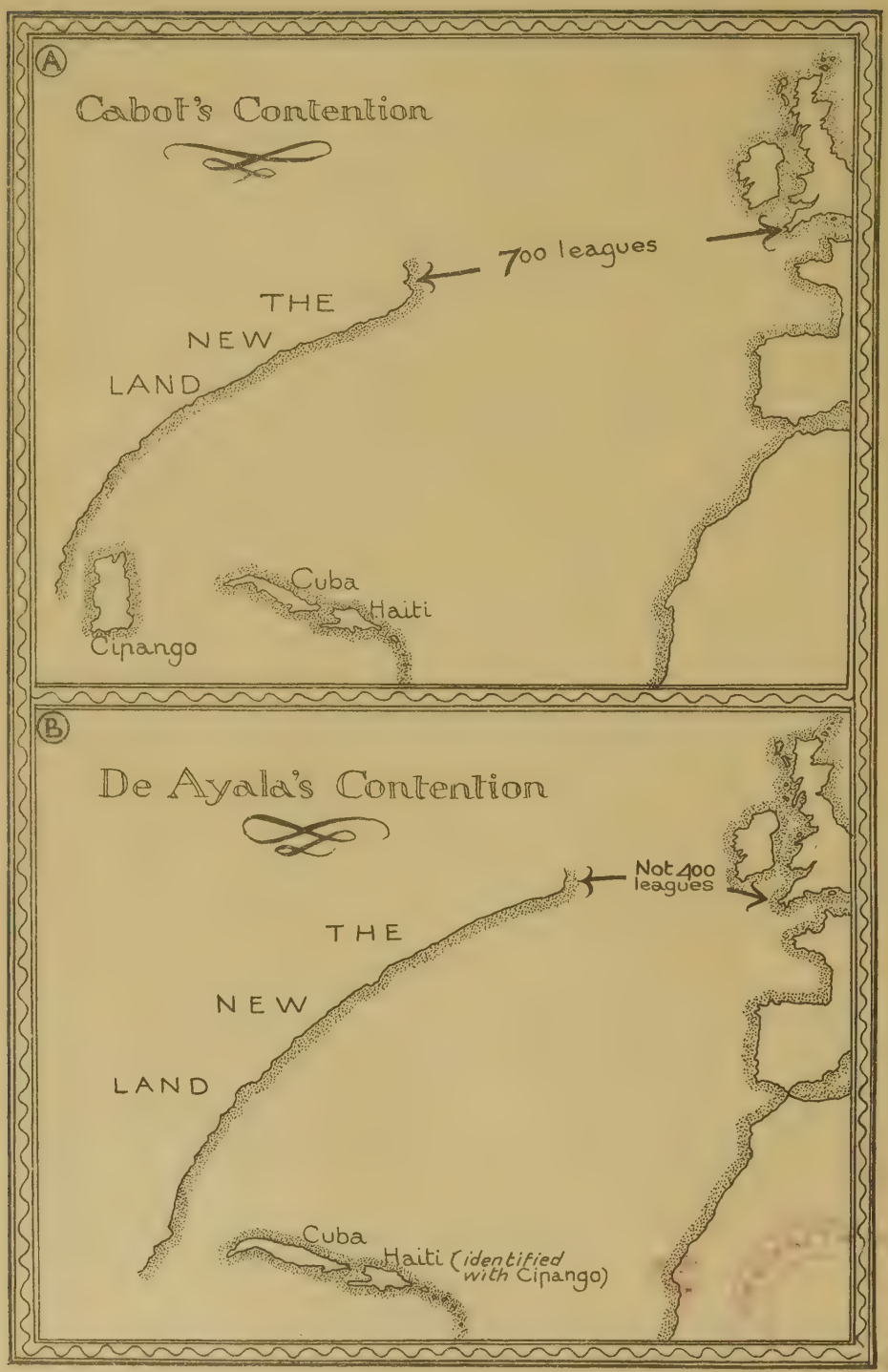
explored by John Cabot. It is notable as an isolated instance of that attribution at the time of its production. Lok may have inferred his statement from the Paris Map (with which, however, it does not exactly coincide) or he may have had independent information. He is known to have been an assiduous collector of documents on discovery.

Robert Thorne the younger wrote from Seville in 1527 that his father and Hugh Elyot had discovered the New Found Land. We cannot tell certainly to what voyage he alluded, but he appended these words to his statement of the fact: "of the which there is no doubt, (as now plainly appeareth) if the mariners would then have been ruled and followed their Pilot's mind, the Land of the Indians from whence all the Gold cometh had been ours: for all is one coast, as by the Card appeareth, and is aforesaid".[1] In 1527 the conquest and the gold of Mexico were current topics in Spain, and Thorne's land of the Indians must be Mexico. He means then that his father's voyage was in the direction of Mexico, but failed to reach it. Because Hugh Elyot was a member of a company for western discovery formed in 1502 it has been generally assumed that the voyage above described must have been made at or after that date. It is not necessarily true. There is nothing to preclude the possibility that the elder Robert Thorne and Hugh Elyot were the companions of John Cabot, and it is the most natural interpretation of the statement that they were the discoverers. Their expedition had a pilot. Why may he not have been Cabot himself? Although, as we know, he was the mainspring and director of the whole enterprise, it is not inexplicable that a Bristol man's passing allusion to the affair should push him into the background and make the Bristol merchants the leaders. That was conceivably the Bristol point of view. Thorne's statement, therefore, must not be rejected as possible (although by no means proved) evidence on the Cabot expeditions. If it is such, its reference is rather to the second and more extended effort than to the reconnaissance of 1497.

We pass next to the assertions made by Pedro de Ayala in his letter written to the Spanish sovereigns on July 25, 1498.[2] His testimony on various points has already been quoted, but his statements on John Cabot's map and its interpretation have been reserved to this place in the enquiry. His general position was that Spanish rights were being invaded and that a false report had been made of the discoveries; on which account he had complained to Henry VII but had received no satisfaction. De Ayala

[1] No. 13. Note that this quotation is from the MS., whose critical phrase was altered by Hakluyt in his printed version of Thorne's work.

[2] No. 33, De Ayala's letter.



Sketch-maps to illustrate the English and Spanish views of John Cabot's discovery in 1497. NOTE : In the lower map Cuba is shown as distinct from the mainland, but it may have been De Ayala's contention that they were continuous.

had seen Cabot's map of 1497 and was convinced that it was falsely drawn, because it showed the new land to be distinct from the Spanish Indies. He for his part believed that what had been discovered, or what was now being sought in 1498, was a Spanish possession, "because it is at the cape which fell to Your Highnesses by the convention with Portugal". Much hangs upon the meaning of this obscure sentence. We know that Cabot had not been near the Antilles in 1497, and that his declared purpose would not take him near them in 1498; for he hoped to reach tropical latitudes far to the west of them. But the Spaniards, under the instruction of Columbus, believed the mainland of Asia to lie only just beyond their islands, and indeed Columbus had asserted that Cuba itself was part of the main continent, although his officers disagreed with him. Here then is the general drift of De Ayala's remark, that Cabot in following his new coast would come down into the Spanish sphere of exploitation. But Cabot had evidently drawn his coastline as slanting west by south to a point far beyond the Spanish islands. How does De Ayala meet this? He does not contend that the coast is wrongly oriented, but he brings it bodily nearer to Europe by halving the distance alleged by Cabot to separate it from the British Isles. Cabot, if we may trust Pasqualigo, had made a passage of 700 leagues. De Ayala says, "I believe the distance is not 400 leagues". The accompanying sketches will illustrate the point.

This was undoubtedly De Ayala's argument. And he was right in his conclusion although wrong in his premises. For Cabot's 700 leagues (reckoning three miles to a league) was approximately the correct distance from Bristol to Newfoundland; it was an excellent piece of dead reckoning for a pioneer voyage, and it indicates that the *Matthew* had made a straight run home with a favourable wind all the way. The error lay in the orientation assigned to the new coast. Cabot had seen only Nova Scotia, and perhaps Maine, in 1497 and had assumed that the whole seaboard continued in the same west-by-south direction; whereas we know (and perhaps he was to find in 1498) that it bends more to the southwards and leads right down upon the north coast of Cuba. De Ayala's detail about "the cape which fell to Your Highnesses" is not so certainly explained, but it probably means Cuba. In 1494, when the Treaty of Tordesillas was negotiated, the geographical discoveries made in the first Columbian voyage of 1492–3 were alone available. Columbus had seen only the eastern part of Cuba and had stated that it was a projection of the Asiatic continent. Portugal was reaching out to Asia by the opposite direction, and thus the claim that Spain had already a *pied à terre* in that continent is fairly certain to have been mentioned by the diplomatists and to have

made a strong impression upon De Ayala's mind.[1] On the whole, we must allow that De Ayala's protest was justified. He was there to guard his master's rights, and he sincerely believed that they were being assailed. He may have seen in Cabot's character and bearing some ground for suspecting falsehood; and if so, he was not altogether wrong, for Cabot, as will be shown, had indeed made a falsification, although of a kind that no one penetrated.

For the rest, De Ayala records a fact of some value to our further investigation: "Since I believe Your Highnesses will already have notice of all this, and also of the chart or mappemonde which this man has made, I do not send it now, although it is here, and so far as I can see exceedingly false". We may be positive, then, that a copy of Cabot's 1497 chart went to Spain in the following year. For even if De Ayala believed wrongly that it was there on July 25, he had an example in his possession and would have sent it on demand.

The next document for consideration is the Hojeda patent. Alonso de Hojeda was a Spanish captain who sailed for the Caribbean in May, 1499, and returned to Spain in April, 1500. In the course of this voyage, in which Juan de la Cosa was his companion, he explored part of the coast of Venezuela and thence steered northwards to Hispaniola before sailing for Spain. During these same years 1499–1500 Columbus on his third voyage revealed the South American coast in the neighbourhood of Trinidad and the Orinoco delta, Vincent Pinzon and Amerigo Vespucci sailed all along northern Brazil and Guiana, and the Portuguese leader Cabral touched eastern Brazil. A whole new and unsuspected continent leapt at once into view, obviously not a part of Asia as traditionally laid down; and it was this southern continent that originally received the name of America after one of its first discoverers. It should be borne in mind that for many years there was no proof of its continuity with the New Land of the north. On June 8, 1501, Hojeda received a patent[2] permitting him to pursue his discoveries westward under this condition (amongst others): "that you go and follow that coast which you have discovered, which runs east and west, as it appears, because it goes towards the region

[1] By 1498 the Spanish navigators could hardly have retained the illusion that Cuba was a cape of the main continent, but De Ayala had been absent from Spain and his information was evidently not up to date.

[2] No. 36, Patent granted to Hojeda. Harrisse (*Disc. of North America*, pp. 328–34, etc.) thinks Hojeda made a second voyage between July 1500 and June 1501. But the discoveries alluded to in the patent belong to 1499, since they are shown on La Cosa's map of 1500.

where it has been learned that the English were making discoveries; and that you go setting up marks with the arms of their Majesties...in order that it be known that you have discovered that land, so that you may stop the exploration of the English in that direction".

The question at once presents itself, where was this region in which the English had been making discoveries? Hojeda himself had been on the north coast of South America, and it was along that coast "which runs east and west" that he was to pursue his way until he came in contact with the English sphere. At first sight therefore it looks as though Cabot in 1498–9 had made a long voyage southwards through the Caribbean to Venezuela. That is how a Spanish historian interprets the evidence. "It is certain that Hojeda in his first voyage [1499] encountered certain Englishmen in the vicinity of Coquibaçoa."[1] But it is highly unlikely. Cabot, when he sailed in 1498, had no intention of trespassing in the Spanish Indies, and his patent limited him to lands unknown to Christians. Moreover, as we shall see, the La Cosa Map, which contains his discoveries, implies that they did not extend as far south as Florida. A less daring interpretation of the Hojeda patent is possible in the light of the geographical knowledge of 1501. The North American coast (thought to be Asia) was believed to slant south-westwards to the tropics. The South American coast seen by Hojeda ran westwards. Either the two must converge and be continuous, or there must be a strait between them; and it might prove to be a narrow strait. The La Cosa Map does not answer this question of the convergence; it bears a picture of a saint inserted at the critical position where the coasts might meet. Fifteen years afterwards the problem was still open, and Peter Martyr could discuss it with inconclusive learning whilst his friend Sebastian Cabot was expecting King Ferdinand to equip an expedition to settle it.[2] Now John Cabot in 1498 had pushed down from the northwards towards the convergence, or towards the strategically important strait which might lie in its place, and other English explorers might in 1501 be preparing to out-distance Cabot and actually find the strait. Hojeda was therefore ordered to push westwards along his coast and anticipate them. Had both parties acted up to their intentions they would have met somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico, each with a trail of flags and royal arms littered along the coast behind him. Things did not go so far, but that was what the Spanish sovereigns had in mind in 1501. That they took it so seriously is evidence that John

[1] M. Fernandez de Navarrete, *Viages y Descubrimientos*, Madrid, 1829, III, p. 41.

[2] No. 49, Peter Martyr's Account.

Cabot's second voyage had reached a point considerably beyond the shores of Nova Scotia.

We may here review what has already been established about the two voyages. In 1497 Cabot had reached North America at a point which we have not yet located. But, whatever that point may have been, he proceeded from it for a comparatively short distance (limited by the time at his disposal—not more than three weeks) along a coast that ran in a westerly and southerly direction. He sailed again in 1498 to follow the same coast until it brought him to the tropics, and he did actually outdistance his former record, although to what extent we have not yet been able to state. But the coastline he followed was obviously that of America south of Newfoundland.

The ground is now clear to approach the most informative and recondite document that bears on the problem, the map of Juan de la Cosa. It contains the information we require, guarded by doors of puzzlement and ambiguity. Many have claimed to unlock these doors, but the solutions they have brought forth have been mutually inconsistent. I am going to apply at least one key that has not been tried before, and must leave my readers to judge whether I have reached the innermost shrine of the mystery.

Juan de la Cosa was a Biscayan seaman who sailed with Columbus in 1492 as pilot of the flagship *Santa Maria*. He again accompanied Columbus on the second voyage in 1493, and he went for the third time to the Caribbean with Hojeda in 1499. When he returned in 1500 he knew the West Indies as well as any man living, and the latitudes of the coasts he had personally visited must have been clear to his mind with the maximum of accuracy attainable by the instruments of the time. Those instruments gave results which erred by not more than two or three degrees at the most, and in favourable conditions were much better than that. In the summer of 1500 La Cosa drew the world-map of which a manuscript copy is now in Madrid. This copy was found among the stock of a Paris antique-shop in 1832, and its history during the previous three centuries remains unknown. The map depicts the east coast of North America as running continuously from the polar region to about 30° N. Then comes a gap filled by a rectangular frame enclosing a picture of St Christopher, south of which lies the new coast of South America discovered in part by La Cosa himself in 1499. Eastwards across the Atlantic are Europe and Africa, quite competently drawn and their salient points recognizable. The Indian Ocean and the southern coasts of Asia are less accurate, although their main regions are identifiable. Then, in the longitude of the

Tracing of the North Atlantic coastlines in La Cosa's Map.

Bay of Bengal a vertical line abruptly cuts off the rest, so that no east coast of China and no islands of Japan are shown. The reason for this is fairly evident. La Cosa did not know whether or not the new land in the west was the east coast of Asia. His map looks like a confession of uncertainty on that great question; and the fact that he was uncertain marks an advance in knowledge, for everyone hitherto had been positive about it, and many remained so for years to come. The map shows only two parallels of latitude, the equator and the tropic of Cancer, and it is to be remarked that the tropic crosses the West African coast at the correct place. For western Europe the portolan maps had long been fairly accurate in their latitudes, and so we may be sure that when la Cosa marks an American point as on a level with Land's End or Finisterre he means that its latitude is 50° or 43° as the case may be.

For our purpose the most interesting part of the map is that containing North America and the West Indies. The North American coastline is furnished with some names, but since there are some important features left unnamed I give here a tracing in which the salient points are lettered from A to G. This is solely for convenience in reference and in no way affects the argument, which is based on the map as La Cosa drew it. It will be noted that from the northern margin, down through point A to point B there are no names or flags marked, and it is therefore to be inferred that this stretch was not included in the English discoveries. A is in the neighbourhood of Iceland and is probably a representation of a projecting cape of Greenland, which could have been known by repute to La Cosa quite independently of the new explorations. The nameless bight stretching from A to B would then represent a linking of Greenland with the New Land. This also was common with early cartographers who were ignorant of the existence of Davis Strait. Point B, where the names and English flags begin, is important. It is as far from Land's End as the Canary Islands are from Cape Ushant. The latter distance, being measurable by latitude, was approximately known to La Cosa. It is actually about 1400 miles. The map, however, appears to be drawn on a projection that exaggerates east-to-west distances in proportion as the latitude from the equator increases, and the true distance of B from Land's End is therefore less than appears. We may take it that La Cosa did not intend B to be much more than 1000 miles from the English coast. He evidently favoured De Ayala's estimate of "not 400 leagues" in preference to Cabot's claim of 700.

If now we look at the coastline westwards from B, we note that its features are named as far as C. There, at *Cavo Descubierto*, the names cease,

except for a general description, *Mar descubierta por Ynglesses*, which covers a large extent of water to the westward. But the detailed nomenclature stops at C. In spite of this, there are flags indicating English discovery of the farther coast along to E; and even beyond that to G, although there are no flags, there are physical configurations which suggest that they are based on definite discovery, and are not a mere imaginary filling of an unknown region. From these circumstances we may infer that La Cosa knew of the discovery of the coastline at least to G, but that he had names only for the nearer stretch from B to C. We know also that Cabot's chart of 1497 had been sent to Spain. What follows? To my mind the answer is that La Cosa's drawing is based on two sources of information. From B to C he copied the chart of 1497, translating its English names into Spanish and so writing them on his own map. From C to G he also copied an explorer's chart, but it was one that gave no names for the details it delineated. And that second chart was made by Cabot in 1498; for there was no one else by whom it could have been made.

I believe the above reasoning to be sound. But as there may be some who will question it, I would emphasize that the remainder of the argument turns upon the assumption that BC represents Cabot's coasting of 1497, and CG his additional discovery of 1498; and in what follows I do not seek to convince those who cannot accept this proposition. I may perhaps be charged with transgressing my own canon, that assumption must not be treated as fact for further inference; but in this case there is nothing else to be done. So long as we are aware of what we are doing, there is no great harm in it.

Granted that assumption, however, we may attempt to identify the coast of 1497. We have an approximate statement of its length, 300 leagues, as Pasqualigo alleges Cabot to have claimed. The distance BC is a little over two-thirds the distance from B to Land's End. By the proportion already adopted BC will therefore be some 800 miles or approximately the 300 leagues of Cabot's own reported estimate of his coasting. If we try to fit this 800 miles to the true map of North America, we find that it agrees fairly well with a track beginning at Cape Race in Newfoundland, continuing past St Pierre and Miquelon to Cape Breton, and thence coasting Nova Scotia and across the Bay of Fundy to some point near the mouth of the Penobscot on the coast of Maine. That would amount to about 800 miles. *Cavo de Ynglaterra* would thus be Cape Race, and *Cavo Descubierto* would lie near the Penobscot. That is a possible interpretation, but I do not think it is the right one. Cabot is not likely to have covered so great an extent of foggy, perilous coast in three weeks or less. I believe

we are bound to cut down his 300 leagues. He may genuinely have overestimated his coasting in the first place, and in the second he had a temptation to overstate his own estimate; for he was concerned to prove that he had found a main continent. Moreover, the map shows a continuous string of names from *Cavo de Ynglaterra* westwards, and there is no gap corresponding to the wide strait between Newfoundland and Cape Breton. Lastly, if *Cavo de Ynglaterra* is Cape Race, what are the two islands, S. Grigor and Y. Verde, to the east of it? On the modern map there is nothing to find for them but empty sea. We must seek another solution.

It is that *Cavo de Ynglaterra* (point B in the sketch) is Cape Breton. Thence we pass down the coast of Nova Scotia. Some of the names upon it are unintelligible in their Spanish form,[1] but the English equivalents of others can be recognized. They are, going westwards, Cape St John, St Nicholas, Trinity Island, Long River, Cape Lizard, St Lucia, Cape St Lucia, and Cape St George. If the latter represents the last point seen in southern Nova Scotia (in the vicinity of Cape Sable), followed by a loss of the land whilst crossing the mouth of the unplumbed Bay of Fundy, the recovered continent near the Penobscot would be very aptly named *Cavo Descubierto*, Cape Discovered, a reassurance that the new land was after all a continent and not an island ending at Cape Sable. Thence, having prospected so far, Cabot was content to turn back and report. On his way back, as Pasqualigo relates, he saw two islands. La Cosa draws them, and names them St Gregory and Green Island.[2] One may be St Pierre or Miquelon, and the other a projecting point of Newfoundland, in the Avalon Peninsula. On this interpretation then, Cabot in 1497 missed Newfoundland on the outward passage and made his landfall near Cape Breton, as the Paris Map indeed would have us believe. He coasted Nova Scotia and pushed on as far as Maine, and on the homeward track he sighted Newfoundland without stopping to examine it. The distance from Cape Breton round Cape Sable to the Penobscot is about 450 miles, or half of that alleged by Cabot on his return.

Referring once more to La Cosa's map, we may now—as the best probability—identify the stretch BC as the coast of Nova Scotia and a

[1] The names are, from east to west: y verde, S. Grigor, Cavo de Ynglaterra, C. fastanatra, Agron, Cavo de S. Johan, S. Nicolas, illa de la trenidat, rio longo, fonte, argair, menistre, C. de lisarto, S. Luzia, jusquei, requilia, C. de S. Luzia, anfor, lagofor, C. de S. Jorge, cavo descubierto, Mar descubierta por Yngleses.

[2] Jomard's reproduction of the La Cosa Map, in *Monuments de la Géographie*, omits Green Island. Our frontispiece is from Jomard, but the accompanying sketch shows the island.

little of Maine. La Cosa, accepting Cabot's own estimate, makes it about twice as long as it should rightly be. In another respect he also accepts an error of Cabot's. This coast is shown as running approximately east and west in the latitude of Bristol, or about 51° N. Actually Nova Scotia lies in 44°–46° N. The mistake of orientation is excusable on the score of compass variation.[1] But the bodily shifting of the whole shoreline an average of six degrees to the northward is another matter. It is too big an error to have been made in good faith. Cabot faked his latitude in order to bring his landfall within the scope allowed by his patent. This falsification was swallowed by De Ayala, keen as he was to scent imposture, and it was accepted also by La Cosa in his turn. De Ayala indeed challenged the accuracy of Cabot's chart, but he did so on a point on which it must have been correct, that of the distance from England. Thus we have La Cosa's map repeating two of Cabot's misstatements, on the latitude and length of the coast of 1497, and throwing in also a mistake of De Ayala's, the too-scanty distance between *Cavo de Ynglaterra* and England.

The rest of La Cosa's new land is from the second source, evidently the chart of 1498, which for some reason omitted to give the names of the features it recorded. That does not mean that the English in 1498 bestowed no names. It may simply be that a Spanish agent obtained a tracing of the coastline without copying the names inscribed upon it. We do not know in what circumstances the thing was done; they may have been of some difficulty. The most probable interpretation of the 1498 discoveries is that point D is an inlet in southern Maine, corresponding most nearly to the Piscataqua River, and that point E is Cape Cod. If the explorers had taken a line outside Cape Cod as soon as they sighted it from the northward, they would not have been aware of the depth of Cape Cod Bay or the true shape of the promontory, and their delineation of the coastline is intelligible. The water from C to E is inscribed, "Sea discovered by the English." Westward of E the next important point is F, where we have a rounded bay, a sharp cape turning eastwards, and a couple of islands. The obvious suggestion is that this means the eastern end of Long Island Sound,[2] which would easily be mistaken for a bay by those who did not penetrate it very deeply. Beyond this lies the stretch FG, which would correspond to the outer coast of Long Island and that

[1] The exact amount of compass variation in this region four centuries ago has not been determined; but if we may judge from the maps, the needle must have pointed considerably west of the true north point.

[2] The position of the islands would seem to preclude its identification with Cape Cod.

of New Jersey, the gulf at G being the mouth of the Delaware. How much farther the explorers went is hard to say. The flags extend only to E (Cape Cod), but, as has been said, the coast at least to G looks as if it is drawn from an actual record and is not merely imaginary. Beyond G may be the region mentioned in the Hojeda patent as the scene of the English discoveries which were alarming the Spanish government. Comparing latitudes, we find that E is nearly on a level with Cape Ushant, and F with Bordeaux. That is to say, La Cosa places them in 48° and 45° respectively. Actually Cape Cod is in 42° and Long Island in 41°. The error in latitude stated by Cabot in 1497 is thus being continued for the discoveries of the following year, but it may represent La Cosa's own modification of his English material. The linear scale of the whole is also exaggerated in conformity with Cabot's original exaggeration of 1497.

The above interpretation of La Cosa's coastline is quite at variance with that adopted by other commentators, and notably by Harrisse. His version makes point F the peninsula of Florida, and E a vicinity south of the Carolinas.[1] Harrisse approached the problem not by working southward from *Cavo de Ynglaterra*, but by working northward from the island of Cuba as placed on La Cosa's map. If we take Cuba as the starting-point, F may plausibly be represented as a very badly drawn Florida, although its distance from Cuba is much too great. But this is to overlook the most surprising fact in the whole La Cosa Map, namely, that its author has deliberately placed his Greater Antilles some ten to twelve degrees too far to the north. His Cuba and Hispaniola stand well above the Tropic of Cancer, whereas in truth those islands lie well below it. La Cosa's northern Cuba is almost on the parallel of Gibraltar, or in about 35° N.; the real latitude of northern Cuba is 23°.

This misplacing of the Antilles is no *bona fide* error. The master mariner of the *Santa Maria* in the epoch-making voyage of 1492, who had pricked off the course as day followed day in keen anxiety, could not have believed that Cuba was in 35°, and that the first landfall on San Salvador was by consequence in the latitude of Palos, his starting point. He knew better than that, and so I have said that he deliberately falsified his map of 1500. Why should he do it? The answer must be that the La Cosa Map is a diplomatic document rather than a scientific statement of fact. Consider the circumstances. The English had found a coast which they claimed would lead them to tropical Asia, well to the west of the Spanish Indies.

[1] See his *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1896), pp. 135–41, and map of 1498 route. A remark on p. 137 would seem to imply that he mistook the "Circulo Cancro" of La Cosa for the equator. That F is Florida is not directly stated, but is implicit in his argument.

The Spaniards, by the mouth of De Ayala, had asserted that a following of that coast would entail intrusion in the Spanish Indies. The Spanish case had to be put to Henry VII, and La Cosa's map represents its embodiment. La Cosa had the English charts, and in the main he accepted them. And so he proved the prospective intrusion by pushing up the Antilles until their surrounding waters impinged upon those already visited by Cabot in 1498. Any extension of the Cabot discoveries would therefore involve trespass. La Cosa's map is a warning-off of Henry VII from any further southward discovery. One can hardly doubt that a copy of it was sent to England. No relevant Spanish map of prior date survives, neither does any for the decade following 1500. But the cartographers of other countries made numerous maps which we still possess. From them it is evident that Spain propagated widely the fictitious position of the Antilles, for these non-Spanish maps, which must have used Spanish information, nearly all place the islands above the tropic until the period 1516–20, when the truth begins to emerge. The only exception I have met with is a chart of c. 1508–9 in the British Museum,[1] which does give the West Indies something like their real latitude. Its author had evidently obtained the truth from a Spanish mariner, whereas his contemporaries worked from the official maps.

We may now review the presumptive conclusions here set forth on John Cabot's discoveries. In 1497 he made a landfall near Cape Breton, explored the coast of Nova Scotia, and sighted a corner of Newfoundland on his way home. In 1498 he coasted as far as the Delaware or the Chesapeake and perhaps a little farther, and thence returned. Robert Thorne may give the reason why the voyage was not pursued further: the mariners would not be ruled and follow their pilot's mind. But this is doubtful owing to his omission of a date. In any event, the tropical course was abandoned, and Cabot returned without having found China and Japan, without having sold his cargoes, without an ounce of spice to show for the outlay. The result was a dead failure, so disappointing that there is not an English record that says a word about it. "In this Mayor's time returned no tidings;" and when tidings did come they were not worth ink and paper.

The attempt was not at once renewed. Spanish protests were acrimonious, and Henry VII could not afford a quarrel for a dubious project.

[1] Egerton MSS. 2803, ff. 8 b–9. Although drawn by an Italian, the North American part of the map is based mainly on Portuguese information. It places all the islands except Cuba south of the Tropic of Cancer.

World Map from Egerton MSS 2803. f.1.

Friendship with Spain was a cardinal point of his policy. Another reason for abandonment also suggests itself. As Cabot sailed southwards in 1498 he must have looked eagerly for signs of Cathayan civilization, for settled government, towns and a native maritime commerce. Marco Polo led him to expect such things, and as we know, he did not find them. Did it dawn upon him that his new land was not Asia at all? There are indications that it did, but one cannot be positive. Certainly La Cosa suspected the truth in 1500. His map, considered as a whole, is a note of interrogation on the point. Again, Sebastian Cabot knew the truth when he made his voyage in search of the North West Passage, and it is possible that he had it from his father's experience of 1498. But Sebastian's voyage was several years later, and there had been others in the interim.[1] On the whole, the question must be left open. But whether John Cabot learned the real nature of America or not, the prospect of an immediate spice trade was at an end. Of all the bright hopes of 1497 there remained only the Newfoundland fishery.

[1] When treating this subject several years ago (in *Maritime Enterprise 1485–1558*, Oxford, 1913) I believed that 1499 was a likely date for Sebastian Cabot's voyage, and consequently made certain that John Cabot discovered the true nature of America in 1498. But I now have reason to think that Sebastian sailed much later, and that the argument is therefore weakened.

CHAPTER VII

JOÃO FERNANDEZ AND THE CORTE REALS

BEFORE proceeding with the further explorations of the English on the coasts of North America, it is necessary to take account of the doings of the Portuguese, since their undertakings in the years 1499–1503 had an influence upon the Bristol adventurers and have also left a rich legacy of cartographical material. The Portuguese expeditions, like most others of early date, afford ground for controversy in the interpretation of their details. For our present purpose, however, we need only to establish an outline and to note certain salient dates. The account here given is based chiefly on those of Dr Biggar, as expressed in his *Voyages of the Cabots and of the Corte-Reals* (1903) and *Precursors of Jacques Cartier* (1911). The former work in particular is indispensable to students for its wealth of cartographical citation and illustration, and the latter for its textual reproduction of documents.

In the Azorean island of Terceira there lived in the last decade of the fifteenth century a small squire or landowner named João Fernandez. His status is described by the Portuguese term *llabrador*. The word is of some consequence, for it is likely that he was the man whose social description became a proper name which, after some vicissitudes, is now attached to the north-eastern coast of America, the Labrador whose inland boundary has recently been determined by a decision of the Privy Council. America, however, was not the region visited by Fernandez. "The land of the Labrador", as Dr Biggar has shown, was originally Greenland, and the story of the transference of the name to its present location is an interesting piece of detective work pursued amid the tortuous clues afforded by the early maps, whose authors themselves had often but the vaguest conception of the coasts they were trying to depict.

João Fernandez, like many of the islanders, was a sea-adventurer as well as a landowner. There are indications that as early as 1492 he was engaged in Atlantic discovery.[1] The date makes it evident that his inspiration did not proceed from the voyages of Columbus but was a manifestation of the absorbing interest long felt by the Portuguese in the unknown Atlantic. There are indications, which will be discussed in the next chapter, that Fernandez was trading with Bristol at the time we first hear of him,

[1] Biggar (1903), p. 52, citing Ernesto do Canto in *Archivo dos Açores*, Vol. XII, paper entitled *Quem deu o nome do Labrador*.

and he may thus have learned of the old Norse discoveries in the North West. However that may have been, his inclinations took him northwards, and from 1492 to 1495 he was making voyages whose outcome is not precisely apparent. He may have reached Greenland in those years, but it is not a proven fact. What he expected to find we do not know, but it can hardly have been the western passage to Asia which prompted Columbus and John Cabot. Perhaps the legends of St Brandan were in his mind.

Dr Biggar thinks that Fernandez accompanied Cabot from Lisbon to Bristol in the spring of 1498 and advised him to take a north-western course by way of Greenland in the voyage of that year. I must venture to disagree, for the evidence is hardly convincing. It consists of two statements. Pedro de Ayala wrote in July, 1498, that Cabot "has been in Seville and at Lisbon seeking to obtain persons to aid him in this discovery". It is a general remark without the slightest indication of the date to which it applies. The Seville and Lisbon visits may have taken place years before, and the likelihood is all against their having occurred in the winter of 1497–8. The administrative documents of that season prove that Cabot had much business to occupy him in England. A winter voyage to the Peninsula entailed a risk of delay which might have imperilled an early start across the Atlantic in 1498. It would have been an act of folly for a man whose project was exciting Spanish animosity to show his face in Seville. And Cabot was at that time so popular in England and so confident of his own sufficiency that it is flatly incredible that he should have been driven to seek aid from his Spanish rivals. No, those Lisbon and Seville transactions must have antedated the issue of Henry VII's patent in 1496. The other statement was made some forty years afterwards by the Spaniard Alonso de Santa Cruz, in the course of a confused account of northern geography. Speaking of Greenland (which he calls Labrador) he says: "It was called the land of the Labrador because a llabrador of the islands of the Azores gave notice and information about it to the King of England, when he sent in search of it Antonio [*sc.* John] Gaboto, the English pilot and father of Sebastian Gaboto, who now is Your Majesty's pilot-major".[1] Santa Cruz distinguishes between the persons of John and Sebastian Cabot, but another passage in his manuscript shows that he knew very little about their discoveries and nothing about their dates; and that what he did know, including the erroneous name "Antonio", was drawn from a German book of 1532, which was itself a paraphrase of Peter Martyr's writings of 1516. The result is a muddle

[1] No. 35, The *Islario* of Alonso de Santa Cruz.

from which it is hard to disentangle anything definite; and it certainly provides no evidence that João Fernandez informed John Cabot about Greenland in the spring of 1498.[1] We do know, however, from irrefutable evidence, that Fernandez was in England in 1501, and that is the obvious date for his communication with Henry VII, who granted him a patent in that year. I feel, therefore, obliged to reject the story that John Cabot went to Lisbon in 1497–8, fell in with Fernandez, brought him back to Bristol, and shaped his course on his advice. We may take it as a good tradition that the llabrador gave his name to Greenland,[2] but there is no evidence that he had done so by 1498.

The earlier voyages of Fernandez are therefore obscure and their nature unknown, and there is nothing to show that they were anything but the search for new islands which had so long engrossed the energies of the Portuguese. In 1499, however, we have something more definite, for in that year the Portuguese designs on North America began to take shape. The Portuguese government must have been interested in John Cabot's announcement that he had reached the east of Asia by a passage which took no more than three months out and home. In September, 1499, Vasco da Gama returned to Lisbon from a voyage which had brought him only to Calicut in the nearer part of the Indian Ocean, but which had taken two years and cost him two-thirds of his crews. The moral was obvious: on geographical grounds alone the shorter route was worth investigating.

By the Treaty of Tordesillas, Portugal was free to make discoveries as far as a meridian which should pass 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde

[1] We may summarize the information possessed by Santa Cruz, as follows:

(1) From Jacobus Ziegler, the German author, that a certain Antoninus Cabotus had made an Arctic voyage under Henry VII (no date).

(2) That the Cabot known personally to Santa Cruz was named Sebastian and not Antoninus.

(3) That Sebastian Cabot's father had been in English service (from independent information).

(4) That it was therefore Sebastian Cabot's father who was named Antoninus and had made the Arctic voyage (by inference). But when we remember that Ziegler merely copied Peter Martyr, who wrote only of Sebastian Cabot, and that Ziegler's "Antoninus" is a mistake for Sebastian, we see the confusion in which Santa Cruz involved himself. He really knew nothing whatever of John Cabot's voyages and his statement is not evidence upon them.

[2] See also below, p. 220.

Islands. If John Cabot's new land was as near to Europe as some believed, it lay probably within the Portuguese sphere, and certainly anything east of it would so lie. But that in itself was not enough to raise expectations of a short track to the spice countries, for Portugal, unlike England, was bound by the Treaty of Tordesillas, and that instrument precluded Portuguese navigation to any place west of the prescribed meridian, whether already discovered by Spain or not. Portugal, therefore, could not hope to operate a short route to Asia unless she could find one without crossing the meridian, in other words, a route northwards by the polar regions. It has already been made plain that there could be no question of a polar route to Cathay until it was realized that the new land across the Atlantic was not Cathay but something distinct from it; and for Portugal in particular it would have been entirely useless to make a circuit of the Arctic only to come round to the longitudes already allotted to Spain. If then we can discern in the Portuguese voyages any indication of a search for a polar route to Asia, we shall know that it was based on a realization of the truth that the new western land was not the coast of Asia. On the other hand, it may be that the northern and north-western lands were thought worthy of investigation simply for their own value and on the assumption that they lay within the Portuguese sphere of influence. As will be shown, there is a good deal of evidence that this motive alone was adequate, and it is a fact that Portugal was vigorously exploiting the Newfoundland fishery within ten years of its discovery.

On October 28, 1499, a month after the return of Da Gama, King Manuel of Portugal issued letters patent to João Fernandez.[1] In consideration of the grantee's intention to discover new islands within the Portuguese sphere, he received a promise of their governorship with privileges similar to those enjoyed by the governors of Madeira and other Portuguese colonies. The application, it will be noted, is to islands, and not to any short track to Asia. But the patent is in a stereotyped form, an example of legislation by reference, and even if an Asiatic route had been contemplated, it would almost certainly have involved the discovery of islands by the way. Their exploitation would have been reckoned a sufficient reward for a man of minor status such as Fernandez. The implication is also that in his previous voyages Fernandez had not made any discoveries of note. Had he already reached Greenland we should expect it to be mentioned, but the allusion is only to future intentions, not to past achievements.

There is no record of any voyage made by Fernandez in pursuance of

[1] No. 37, Letters Patent to João Fernandez.

this grant. Nevertheless, as will be shown, he turned up in England two years later with information which Henry VII regarded as important; and there is also the well-founded tradition that the Land of the Labrador was so named from an Azorean squire who entered the English service. It is true that there were two other men to whom the same description applied, but it is on the whole probable that João Fernandez was the individual who was concerned in the re-discovery of Greenland in the period now under review. Whether he went with an expedition under his sole command, whether he joined forces with the brothers Corte Real, who now come into the story, or whether he stood aside and merely reported to Henry VII the results of the first Corte Real exploration, must remain open questions.

The next established fact is that King Manuel issued a new patent on May 12, 1500, before there had been any opportunity for Fernandez to have returned from an Arctic voyage. The new grant was to Gaspar Corte Real, a nobleman who owned large properties in Terceira, and who at once took the lead in the Portuguese effort. It is not to be inferred, however, that the new grant cancelled that to Fernandez. All these Portuguese patents applied only to such lands as might be actually found by the grantees, and there was nothing to prevent two independent leaders from competing in the same general direction. The same is true of Henry VII's grants, which in that respect differ from the regional monopolies conferred by later English governments from the time of the Muscovy Company onwards.[1]

Gaspar Corte Real sailed northwards from Lisbon without delay, and in June, 1500, reached the east coast of Greenland. Dr Biggar, whose account I follow, reconstructs his track from the maps and other contemporary evidence.[2] After being stopped by ice from further progress up the east coast, Corte Real rounded Cape Farewell and visited the west coast, and thence returned to Lisbon before the end of the year. The Greenland shores were sufficiently forbidding to discourage any plans for their exploitation, and the fact that Corte Real returned to them is a sign that they possessed another attraction. This can only have been that there was hope of a passage past them to Asia. Be this question as it may, Gaspar Corte Real sailed again for Greenland in 1501. The ice this year was a greater obstacle, and he failed to close with the coastline. Thence he turned westwards across Davis Strait and came to the coast of the

[1] A just appreciation of this fact would have saved considerable misinterpretation of the ventures of Henry VII's time.

[2] *Cabots and Corte-Reals*, pp. 87–91.

The North Atlantic from the Map of Albert de Cantino

present Labrador. He followed it southwards past Hamilton Inlet, Sandwich Bay and the Strait of Belle-Isle, and arrived off the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland. He seized sixty Indians as slaves, and in September divided his expedition. Two ships he sent home with the captives to Portugal, and they arrived safely in October. With the third vessel Gaspar Corte Real himself continued southwards down Cabot's coast and was never heard of again. In some unknown disaster he perished with all hands.[1]

The news brought home in October gave some satisfaction to the Portuguese government. If there was no Asiatic passage established there was at least something valuable in Newfoundland—the fishery, the long timber suitable for spars, and the natives who, it was thought, would make good slaves. Portugal had hitherto obtained her spars in Europe, and the largest were brought by the Hanse traders from the Baltic, a voyage quite as costly as that across the Atlantic. With the new Indian Ocean traffic demanding big ships, a Newfoundland producing-area was worth consideration. In January, 1502, as Gaspar Corte Real had not returned, his brother Miguel obtained a patent to continue the discovery. He sailed from Lisbon with three ships on May 10 and reached Newfoundland by the end of June, without taking Greenland in his course. He then dispersed his ships on separate explorations with orders to rendezvous on August 20. Two of the vessels met on the agreed date, but the third, with Miguel Corte Real on board, never appeared. Like his brother he had been swallowed by the unknown. The two survivors returned to Portugal, whence a fourth expedition sailed in 1503.[2] It examined the Newfoundland coasts but gleaned no tidings of the lost explorers. Thenceforward Portugal attempted no more discovery in this quarter for many years, and her mariners devoted themselves to the fishery. It would seem that the two expeditions to Greenland in 1500–1, if they were in search of an Asiatic passage, revealed to the Corte Reals no hope of progress in that direction. But João Fernandez, who may have accompanied the first, although certainly not the second, thought there was still some promising work to be done and determined to market his ideas in England.

[1] Biggar, *op. cit.* pp. 91–106.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 106–10.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMPANY ADVENTURERS TO THE NEW FOUND LANDS

An entry in the Bristol customs ledger, of date January 26, 1493, shows a certain "Johannes ffornandus" exporting goods in a ship bound for Lisbon.[1] This may be the João Fernandez whose projects for discovery have been mentioned in the previous chapter. But the identification is not proved, for the name was a common one in Portugal, and its bearer in the 1493 record may have been a different man. Still less satisfactory is an entry of September 19, 1486, which gives among the merchants in a Portuguese ship from Madeira the surnames "ffornandus" and "Gunsalus", without indication of their Christian names.[2] But the matter is interesting, for one of the Azorean adventurers with whom we shall have to deal in this chapter was named João Gonsalvez. There is a possibility that these men were known in Bristol years before they became prominent in exploration.

Early in 1501 three Azoreans, João Fernandez, Francisco Fernandez and João Gonsalvez, were engaged in a plan of discovery with three Bristol merchants, Richard Warde, Thomas Asshehurst and John Thomas. They petitioned the king for a grant of letters patent, and received it in completed form on March 19.[3] As has been mentioned in connexion with the Cabot patent, this indicates that the business had been broached at least some weeks earlier and that keen discussion and scrutiny of the conditions had taken place. As before, we are justified in relying upon the literal meaning of every phrase, and we are not justified in assuming that anything not stated was intended.

The patent is much longer and more detailed than that accorded to John Cabot in 1496. It concedes to the grantees permission to sail in all the seas, as well southern as northern, eastern and western in order to discover in any part of the world heathen lands "which before this time were and at present are unknown to all Christians". Such lands may be annexed and subdued by the grantees, the sovereignty being reserved to the king. General licence is given to all the king's subjects to resort to the lands so found and to dwell and trade in them under the governance of the grantees. The latter receive power to make and enforce suitable laws, and it is not stated that they shall be laws uniform with those of

[1] E. 122, 20/9 (Ledger, 8–9 Hen. VII).

[2] E. 122, 20/5 (Ledger, 1–2 Hen. VII).

[3] Nos. 38 and 39, Petition and Letters Patent of 1501.

England. For the first ten years unprivileged subjects shall go to the new lands only with the permission of the grantees, and after ten years, with permission from the king and the grantees jointly. The grantees are permitted to import any goods in any ships (which includes foreign bottoms) into any ports in England, all laws and ordinances to the contrary notwithstanding. For the first four years they may import goods in one ship, without limitation of the number of voyages she may make, free of all customs, subsidies and other dues, but they must pay the usual rates on other ships. The masters and mariners of their ships are allowed exemption from duties on small quantities of imported merchandise on their personal accounts. During the first ten years the grantees may levy on unprivileged subjects trading in the new lands a toll of one-twentieth of all the goods brought home, provided that they act as factors for such subjects in the new lands. Any foreigners who intrude into the new lands may be expelled by force, even though they belong to a nation in amity with England. The grantees are empowered to appoint resident officers and deputies in the new lands and to exercise therein and in the adjacent seas the office of Admiral, with jurisdiction as in England. They are to hold the conquered territories in perpetuity and by fidelity alone, without fee or tribute, the king's dignity and sovereignty always reserved. The three Azoreans and their children are accepted as the king's naturalized subjects for all legal purposes except the payment of customs and subsidies, for which they shall continue in the status of foreigners. The grant concludes with a direction to the customers of Bristol to honour the exemptions conferred in it.

There are two copies of the patent, a Privy Seal or preliminary instruction to the Lord Chancellor, and a final version inscribed upon the Patent Roll after the Great Seal had been affixed. The former, but not the latter, contains an additional clause to the effect that no foreigner, by virtue of any grant formerly made or in future to be made, shall expel the present grantees from their title to their new territories. This clause in the Privy Seal is struck through and, as has been said, makes no appearance in the completed patent. It was evidently an allusion to the Cabot grant and was designed to limit its scope, a precaution which on second thoughts was seen to be unnecessary. Its insertion and deletion are evidence of the care with which the whole document was scrutinized.

For more than one reason I have given a close analysis of this patent. Previous commentators have not weighed it carefully, and have made false inferences and omitted just inferences from its terms.[1] On other grounds

[1] The charge lies against myself amongst others. In *Maritime Enterprise* (1913) I missed points which now appear warranted.

it is worthy of study. It expresses certain principles and practices which became standard in trading and colonizing charters for two centuries onwards, and it contains others which were reversed in later grants. Students of colonial history will find grounds of comparison. The model appears to be drawn from the Portuguese patents of the fifteenth century, and we may reasonably regard João Fernandez and his friends as in some small sense among the founders of our imperial polity. No one can read this grant and that which followed in 1502 and adhere to the notion that the Gilbert patent of 1578 is the fundamental document it has often been represented.

Some comment is necessary. The privileges are to apply to the discovery of lands hitherto unknown to all Christians. The wording is clear and emphatic, and since the phrase in question is the keystone of the grant there is no possibility that it was carelessly drafted. The coasts discovered by John Cabot are therefore excluded, for they were not in 1501 unknown to Christians. Equally, the coasts of Greenland are excluded, for they had been discovered in 1500 by Gaspar Corte Real, and the fact must have been known to João Fernandez even if he had not taken part in the discovery. As has been shown, there is reason to believe that it was he who reported the finding of Greenland to Henry VII. But Fernandez was not seeking privileges of exploitation in Greenland. Had he so been, the patent would have been worded differently; it would have applied, like Cabot's second grant, to "the land and isles of late found by our well-beloved João Fernandez". It follows therefore that the region to be searched by the adventurers of 1501 was either North America south of John Cabot's limit—the coast of the Carolinas and Florida perhaps—or the north-western part between Greenland and Newfoundland—the coast of Labrador and Davis Straits. The latter is on the whole more likely. There is no evidence that this Bristol syndicate went southwards. Hugh Elyot, as has been seen, did make an undated voyage towards the tropics, but he was not a member of the 1501 syndicate, and his excursion was very possibly with Cabot. João Fernandez was a man who looked to the north, and none of the Portuguese of this period seem to have shown any interest in the tropical west, which they admitted to be Spanish ground. The Cabot patent also was still alive, and, although its privileges were limited to lands actually discovered by John Cabot and his associates, its owners in 1501 could have argued strongly that it would be unfair to permit others to carry that discovery forward. It thus seems probable that the grantees of 1501 intended to push north-westward from Newfoundland up the coast of Labrador. That being so, it is highly likely that

they were in search of the North West Passage and realized that the new land was not Asia. I forbear to adduce the evidence of maps, since there is not one that can be shown to record the voyages of this syndicate and of no one else.

Mention of the Cabot patent here compels a digression. Harrisse and others have assumed that John Cabot's grant of 1496 had expired or been cancelled. Harrisse indeed propounds the extraordinary theory that such a grant held good only for a single expedition, and that therefore the patent of 1496 expired with the voyage of 1497, and that of 1498 with the voyage of that year. The 1498 document, it is true, was a mere commission for an immediate levying of ships, but it contained no limitation of the time for which it was to hold good. It is in any case unimportant. The original patent of 1496 was John Cabot's title-deed to his discoveries. It was of indefinite duration, heritable in perpetuity. It could not therefore expire, and it had certainly not been cancelled by 1501. The mere fact that the Privy Seal of that year contained a clause limiting its effect showed that it still held good. That clause was struck out because a re-reading of the Cabot grant showed it to be needless. Cabot's privileges applied only to lands newly discovered by him. The privileges of Warde, Asshehurst and their friends applied only to lands newly discovered by them; and there could be no overlapping. The Cabot grant, then, was still a living instrument in 1501; nay more, it was still uncancelled in 1550. For in that year old Sebastian Cabot, its inheritor, obtained a re-issue from the Chancery of Edward VI, certified to be a true copy of the entry made on the rolls in 1496. He had lost the document issued to his father, and wished to have proof of its terms.[1] Now, Sebastian Cabot was not the man to go to that expense for mere sentiment. He obtained that copy because the patent had never been cancelled and something might still be made of it.[2] What had become of the original is not stated. Presumably it had passed to Lewis Cabot, the eldest son, and had disappeared with him from recorded history.

To return to the associates of 1501, it is evident that they despatched an expedition across the Atlantic in that year. The Privy Purse records contain an entry of January 7, 1502: "To men of Bristol that found the isle, 100 shillings".[3] The phrase "the isle" must not be construed too literally;

[1] Patent Roll, 4 Ed. VI, pt. vi. quoted in Harrisse, *J. and S. Cabot* (1896), pp. 449–50.

[2] If tested at law, the patent would probably have been declared void by lack of use; but it might have been made the basis of a claim for some pension levied on the proceeds of the Newfoundland fishery of 1550.

[3] No. 44, Payments to explorers, 1502–5.

it is merely the clerk's impression of what had been discovered, and may mean a mainland. Later in the year 1502 there are two more entries: on September 23, "to a mariner that brought an eagle, 6s. 8d.", which may or may not be relevant; and on September 30, "to the merchants of Bristol that have been in the new found land, £20", which certainly is. Together these entries prove a western voyage in 1501 and a second in 1502.

The Chronicle of Robert Fabyan, paraphrased by Stow and Hakluyt, has also something to the point.[1] Under date of the seventeenth year of Henry VII (August 22, 1501–August 21, 1502), Hakluyt's version says: "This year also were brought unto the king three men, taken in the new found island". These savages, the account continues, were clothed in beasts' skins and ate raw flesh, and in their demeanour were like brute beasts. Two years afterwards there were still two of them to be seen about the Palace of Westminster, clad in English garments and looking like Englishmen. The description, especially the detail of the raw flesh, applies rather to Eskimos than to Indians from Florida, and is a confirmatory indication that the expeditions went to the North-West. Stow's version is similar but gives the date as "1502, ann. reg. 18", which would place the arrival of the savages after August 21, 1502. Stow also adds that the explorer who captured them was Sebastian Cabot, a gratuitous and erroneous interpolation, and not the information of Fabyan himself. The vagueness of the date leaves it uncertain whether the savages were carried off by the expedition of 1501 or by that of 1502.

It is evident that the expedition of 1502 achieved results that were considered important. Not only was the lump sum of £20 bestowed upon the Bristol merchants, but on September 26 the king granted annual pensions of £10 each to Francisco Fernandez and João Gonsalvez.[2] They are described as "our trusty and well-beloved subjects", and the reward is given "in consideration of the true service which they have done unto us, to our singular pleasure, as captains unto the new found land". The Privy Seal which conferred these pensions has not been preserved. It is alluded to in another, of December 6, 1503, which is our authority for the date of the original grant. The 1503 document is an order to the Exchequer to issue tallies to be handed to the Bristol customers against payment of the pensions, as had been done in the case of John Cabot. It is noteworthy that payment is to be made to Fernandez and Gonsalvez in person or to the bringer of the warrant in their names, an indication

[1] Nos. 30 and 31, The Chronicle of Robert Fabyan.

[2] Nos. 42 and 45, Pensions to Fernandez and Gonsalvez.

that they themselves might be expected to be absent overseas when payment fell due. João Fernandez received no reward, and his name drops out from subsequent records. His doings had not given the king any cause for pleasure, and it seems likely that he returned to Portugal, unless indeed he died in the course of the 1501–2 adventures. It is a pity that no contemporary writer was moved to record this important voyage of 1502. London appears to have borne no part in it, as it had in Cabot's second expedition, and this explains the silence of London annalists like Robert Fabyan and the author of the anonymous Chronicle. They noted the three savages brought to Westminster, but the rest did not interest them. The Bristol city records apparently contain no information; at least the local historians have reported none. The muniments of the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol, which was founded in 1467 and perhaps included Warde, Asshehurst and Thomas in its membership, might be a more likely source. But an inquiry by the present writer elicited a reply that the Society possesses no records of date earlier than the close of the sixteenth century. We are therefore left to guess at what was accomplished in 1502. The most probable answer is that the voyage produced good hopes of a passage to Asia. Actual colonization of the Labrador coast for its own sake can never have appeared attractive, although its fish, furs and timber may have looked promising; but these things were to be had equally in the milder regions revealed by John Cabot. The lost story of 1502 may be imagined as similar to that brought home by Frobisher in 1576.

Two documents of the early part of 1502 indicate maritime activities on the part of certain other men in whom we are interested. On January 7 a warrant was addressed to the Exchequer on behalf of Robert Thorne, William Thorne and Hugh Elyot, merchants of Bristol.[1] It mentioned that these men had lately bought in Normandy a ship of 120 tons called the *Verdure* of Dieppe and since renamed by them the *Gabriel* of Bristol. At the time of writing she was at Bordeaux lading a cargo of wines and woad. In consideration of the fact that her new owners offered to place her at the king's service when required, they were to have remission of £20 from the customs and subsidies due on her cargo at her next arrival from Bordeaux in the port of Bristol.

The order of January 7 directed the Exchequer officers to prepare the usual tally and hand it to the merchants, who would in turn present it to the Bristol customers. This would take some time, and it is possible that the ship might already have reached Bristol before the formalities were

[1] No. 40, Bounty to Robert Thorne, etc.

concluded. In that event the customers would have exacted full payment of duties before releasing the cargo; for the tenor of all these documents is that the administration was strict on such points. The remission was to be only in respect of a voyage from Bordeaux. If, therefore, the ship was to be otherwise employed after her return from that place in January, her owners would need to seek further authority for recovering their £20 bounty. There is a faint indication that this was done; for on May 4, 1502, a certain Thomas Thorne was paid £20 by the Bristol customers on presentation of an Exchequer tally.[1] No certain inference can be made from this, but it is perhaps legitimate to suggest a possibility. It is that the *Gabriel* did not go again to Bordeaux, and that Robert and William Thorne and Hugh Elyot were absent from Bristol in May, leaving Thomas Thorne as their agent to collect the £20. Nothing is otherwise known of Thomas Thorne, but he was presumably a relative of Robert and William. He may have received the grant from the Crown for some service of his own; but the coincidence of the amount, £20, is worth taking into account. If the above reasoning be allowed, we have here a hint that Robert and William Thorne and Hugh Elyot were themselves engaged in 1502 on business that took them out of Bristol for a considerable time. They may have made an Atlantic voyage that summer, possibly that voyage recorded by the younger Thorne, whose exasperating lack of a date makes it applicable in so many different connexions. I do not press this, for my own preference is for regarding the Thorne story as applying to John Cabot's expeditions. But if the Thornes and Elyot crossed the ocean in 1502 it is fairly certain that they did so under the terms of the Cabot patent.[2] That instrument was undoubtedly in operation, as is shown by references in a new patent issued by Henry VII at the close of the year, and now demanding our consideration.

On December 9, 1502, letters patent were granted to Hugh Elyot and Thomas Asshehurst, merchants of Bristol, and to João Gonsalvez and Francisco Fernandez, described as esquires of the Azores, and to their heirs, attorneys, factors or deputies, permitting them to sail all the seas and "find, recover, discover and search out" any heathen lands in any part of the world (without the limitation contained in previous grants, that the lands must be hitherto unknown to Christians).[3] The only ex-

[1] No. 41, Payment to Thomas Thorne.

[2] The justification for devoting a paragraph to this highly problematical voyage is that fresh evidence may one day emerge to link up the existing hints. Were they not on record the future discovery might pass unrecognized.

[3] No. 43, Letters Patent of 1502.

pressed limitation is that the grantees may not intrude into any regions *first discovered* by the Portuguese or other friendly nations, and *now in their possession*. Then follow clauses similar in principle to those of 1501, but differing in detail. The king's subjects may resort to the new lands as before, and the jurisdiction of the grantees shall be of the same nature. For the first forty years unprivileged people shall need the licence of the king and of the grantees, and even after forty years the licence shall be necessary for lands newly found by the grantees. The exemption from duties for the cargoes of one ship is to extend to five years. Mariners and masters receive similar exemptions on their small personal ladings. For forty years the grantees may levy one-twentieth on the goods imported by unprivileged merchants from the new lands. The provisions on expulsion of foreigners, tenure, and powers of Admiralty are as before. All the foregoing applies to lands discovered or recovered, and not necessarily hitherto unknown. But if the grantees shall discover any lands not heretofore discovered by the king's subjects by virtue of other letters patent under the Great Seal, then they may possess and administer them without impediment from any other subjects, none of whom shall dare to resort thither without licence. And although Richard Warde, John Thomas and João Fernandez and their heirs were privileged by the patent of 1501, nevertheless they are not now to resort to any lands "found, recovered or discovered anew" under the present patent, without licence from the present grantees.

Two more provisions were added, evidently after the main body of the document had been determined. Since Elyot, Asshehurst, Gonsalvez and Francisco Fernandez will incur heavy charges and great danger to their persons and goods, they may have exemption from duties for five years upon the ladings of a second vessel, not over 120 tons in burden; and Gonsalvez and Fernandez shall henceforward be fully naturalized and pay duties on the same scale as Englishmen.

The most interesting feature of this patent consists in an omission, the omission, that is, of the proviso that the lands to which the first part of it relates must be lands hitherto unknown to Christians. It was thus open to the grantees, besides discovering new lands of their own, to "recover" and exploit lands found under the Cabot patent or under that of 1501. Moreover, although Warde, Thomas and João Fernandez of the 1501 association are expressly debarred from resorting without licence to lands exploited under the new grant, there is no word of prohibition to John Cabot, his sons, or their deputies. The meaning must be that the Cabot patent is still uncancelled and may be exploited by its owners, that the

grantees of 1502 may trespass upon its jurisdiction, but that the Cabot grantees may not trespass upon lands newly found by the men of 1502. In other words, there is overlapping and a partial fusion of interests, the Cabot discoveries being so important that the grantees of 1502 are allowed to share in the development of the very extensive coast-line involved. Unless some representative of the Cabot interests had also been in the association of 1502, it might have been expected that difficulties would arise. It looks extremely probable that Hugh Elyot is the common factor. He and the Thornes had possibly been engaged with John Cabot, they had jointly acquired a ship of 120 tons (such as was now exempted from duties), and his name is newly introduced into the reconstructed syndicate of 1502. However that may be, he and Asshehurst and the two Azoreans have the whole field of discovery thrown open to them without any direct cancellation of the Cabot claims. The king's policy was evidently to promote discovery with equality of opportunity for the discoverers.

The reservation of foreigners' rights deserves scrutiny. It is the explicit statement of the principle that had been implicit in the sanction given to John Cabot in 1496. Lands debarred to the grantees must be lands first discovered by the foreign nations concerned and now in their possession. In practice this amounted to a reservation only of the Spanish West Indies; for although the Portuguese had made discoveries in the North West they had not followed them by effective occupation. So early in the history of expansion appears the principle which the British Empire had consistently followed ever since. Prior discovery could be claimed by Portugal in Greenland, on the score of Gaspar Corte Real's expedition of 1500. Whether it could also be claimed for the Labrador coast we do not know, for it is uncertain whether the English voyage of 1501 covered the same ground as Corte Real in that year. But in any case Henry VII did not admit mere discovery as a sufficient title.

The association privileged in 1502 became known as the Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands, and that title is found applied to it in a document of 1506 here brought to notice for the first time.[1] The Privy Purse entries give evidence of voyages made by it from 1503 to 1505.[2] On September 15, 1503, there is a payment of half a mark to the servant of Sir Walter Herbert for bringing the king "a Brazil bow and two red arrows". It may have nothing to do with the Atlantic voyage from Bristol,

[1] No. 46, The Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands.

[2] No. 44, Payments to Explorers, 1502–5.

but the bow certainly came from across the ocean, although perhaps from the Spanish Indies. The word "Brazil" indicates a western land and was not yet specially applied to South America. More certain is an entry of two months later date. On November 17, 1503, twenty shillings were paid "to one that brought hawks from the Newfounded Island". In the following spring a new venture was in preparation, and on April 8, 1504, "a priest that goeth to the new Island" received forty shillings. By August 25, 1505, some vessel had returned from yet another voyage. On that date there are two entries: "To Portingals that brought popinjays and cats of the mountain with other stuff to the King's Grace, £5"—Gonsalvez and Fernandez paying their respects; and "To Clays going to Richmond with wild cats and popinjays of the Newfound Island, for his costs, 13s. 4d.". It lightens the dim story with a human gleam, this picture of the keen-faced king adorning his walls with strange weapons, stroking the head of some gaudy parrot as he mused on what the ocean might bring forth, and employing as his servitors (along with Lambert Simnel) two silent savages, washed and clothed, from the New Found Land. A royal palace, one gathers from the Household Books, was a museum of curiosities, and they meant more in that dawn of a new world than they can ever mean to the jaded omniscience of to-day.

The parrots have a practical significance, for they did not come from Greenland or the ice-strewn shores of Davis Strait. The climatic range of the species does indeed extend into countries with severe winter weather, but not so far north as that. One kind of parrot was known on the shores of Lake Ontario a century ago, and they may possibly have been obtained by the Bristol men in Newfoundland or even in the extreme south of Labrador. But there is a greater likelihood that these "popinjays" came from the milder American coastline discovered by John Cabot and are evidence that the voyage of 1505 had been directed southward. The wild cats were perhaps living samples of the numerous American fur-bearing animals that may have provided a lucrative trade. The return before the end of August of a venture which presumably set forth in the spring indicates a rather brief expedition. Was it perhaps a visit to a colony permanently resident on the American coast? We cannot tell, and there is no scrap of evidence other than that the patents contemplated the establishment of such colonies. The notice of the priest certainly suggests a settled community, for it was not customary for merchant vessels to carry a chaplain for the voyage alone.

For the fiscal year 1503–4 (Michaelmas to Michaelmas) we have an Account Book of the Bristol customs which gives a complete view of the

dutiable commerce of the port for the period in question.[1] There is no such record for the previous ten years, back to 1493, and there is no other to the end of Henry VII's reign. From this book may be gleaned some indications about the voyage of 1504. First, it is possible to deduce something of the movements of prominent merchants. Among those mentioned occur the names of John Jay, Hugh Elyot, Robert Thorne, William Thorne, Thomas Asshehurst and William Clerk. The last-named was a London man who did considerable trade from Bristol. As will be shown on a later page, he was a partner in the expeditions to the new lands, and although his name does not appear in the patents it is evident that he acted in the guise of a deputy or licensee of the principals. The same is very probably true of the Thornes. The book gives the names of merchants every time they pay duty on goods imported or exported through the custom house. It yields no direct information on voyages across the Atlantic. But that is no evidence that none was made, for the Company had exemption from duties on the ladings of two ships inwards, with which vessels the customers would not concern themselves; and on the outward passage it is conceivable that nothing was carried but undutiable victuals and fishing gear. It is the dates of mention of the various merchants that are significant.

John Jay did business at the custom house fairly continuously throughout the year, with a maximum interval from April 26 to July 1st. That is too short to admit of an Atlantic voyage, and indeed, there is nothing to connect him with the undertaking but the fact that he had promoted the expedition of John Lloyd long before in 1480. He must by this time have been an elderly man. Hugh Elyot is mentioned in December, 1503, twice in January, 1504, and again on February 22. Thenceforward he does not appear again until August 16, although in the interim there are frequent payments by a certain John Elyot who was presumably a relative. Robert Thorne is busy at Bristol all through the season. His maximum interval of non-appearance is from January 16 to April 11, 1504, and thenceforward his name occurs about once a month. He certainly did not cross the Atlantic in 1504, and that year is therefore not the date of the voyage of discovery mentioned by his son in 1527. William Thorne, on the other hand, is absent from the record from January 16 to August 28. Thomas Asshehurst makes but one appearance, on August 12. William

[1] Exchequer 122, 199/1. Some entries relating to the *Matthew* are printed in No. 18, but the whole book, from which the observations in the present page are drawn, is too voluminous to be reproduced in full.

Clerk is mentioned twice in January, again on February 9, and then no more until August 12.

We may sift out a positive statement from the above evidence. Hugh Elyot, William Thorne and William Clerk all cease to do business in person at Bristol in January or February, 1504, and all begin again in August, on the 16th, 13th, and 12th of that month respectively; and Thomas Asshehurst also does business for the first time on August 12, not having been active in Bristol in the previous winter. I do not believe that mere coincidence is sufficient to account for these dates. I think it is a warrantable inference that Elyot, Thorne, Clerk and Asshehurst were absent on some common employment from the end of February to the beginning of August.

Let us turn to the ships. I have analysed the movements of all Bristol ships mentioned in this book under the designation of *navicula*, which, as has been shown, means generally a moderate-sized vessel suitable for ocean work. And since there are none in this particular volume described as *navis*, the former term must here include the large vessels also. The *Gabriel*, for instance, which we know to have been of 120 tons,[1] is called a *navicula*. The smaller class, the *batella*, I have omitted. They are very numerous, and would confuse rather than clarify the argument. The result of the enquiry is less conclusive than is that concerning the merchants. It amounts to this. The *Francis* of Bristol entered from an Irish port on January 2, 1504, and is thenceforward mentioned no more until August 9, when she sailed for Portugal. There are three alternative explanations of the interval: either she was lying idle at Bristol for seven months; or she had gone on a coasting voyage and perhaps sailed overseas from another port, returning in like manner to Bristol by way of an English port; or she was employed by the Company across the Atlantic. In the two latter events her lading would not be entered at the custom house, for the coasting trade was not dutiable, and the imports from America were exempt. The *Gabriel*, which belonged to Elyot and the Thornes, entered from Andalusia on January 16, and there is no further mention of her in the book. If her next voyage was across the Atlantic, and her return in August, it is conceivable that she was not again used until the record terminated in September; repairs were probably necessary. There are two other Bristol ships which are first mentioned on August 16 and August 29 respectively. They are the *Austen* and the *Mary Bonaventure*. The fact that they do not appear in the previous winter may indicate that they were new ships. The dates of their first mention are significant but inconclusive; they may be

[1] She was the vessel on which Elyot and the Thornes obtained their bounty of £20.

consistent with a return from America at the beginning of August. All other Bristol vessels, including the *Matthew*, are sufficiently well accounted for to preclude their having crossed the Atlantic in 1504.

We are thus left with four possible vessels for the Atlantic voyage, and the presumption in favour of the *Francis* and the *Gabriel* is stronger than that for the two others. It seems reasonably probable that the *Francis* and the *Gabriel* were used in the voyage of 1504 and that it was on their homeward cargoes that the Company claimed exemption. If a third or even a fourth ship went also, their names would not necessarily be recorded on their return, for it would be an obvious course to cram all dutiable lading into the two exempt ships.

On consideration of all the evidence, it may be claimed that we have here a credible outline of the Company's operations in 1504. There were two or more ships, under the direction of Hugh Elyot, William Thorne, William Clerk and Thomas Asshehurst. There is no mention this year of Gonsalvez and Francisco Fernandez, although the Privy Purse accounts indicate that they came home in 1505. Were they resident in some overseas settlement until that date? The 1504 customs entries suggest that the start on that occasion may have been made in March or even at the end of February, although the Privy Purse item shows that the priest had not left by April 8. But we are not compelled to assume that all the ships went together or even to the same destination. For all we know, there may have been two different areas under exploitation; the patent covered all.

So much for 1504. For 1505 we have the return by August 25 of the Portuguese bringing wild cats and parrots from the New Found Land. That is the last datable expedition of the Company, although there is nothing to suggest that its affairs were being wound up. Our remaining documents throw more light upon its activities, but there is no indication of the years to which they refer.

Some papers in the series known as Early Chancery Proceedings enable us to trace the parties a little further. In the autumn of 1506 William Clerk brought an action against Hugh Elyot in respect of various money matters. His bill of complaint[1] says that about September 12, 1505, Elyot was cape merchant of the *Michael* of Bristol, of 95 tons, bound for San Lucar de Barrameda, a port near Seville in which the English traders did much of their Andalusian business. By the "law merchant" Elyot, as the first among a number of shippers to charter the vessel, was liable to pay freightage on any cargo space left vacant in her. On the voyage home from Spain there were fifteen tons left vacant, the usual freight being

[1] Early Chanc. Proc., Bundle 247, No. 48.

22 shillings per ton, and Clerk accordingly claimed £16. 10*s*. Elyot had refused to pay and had without cause arrested the ship at Bristol. Hugh Elyot in a brief reply[1] denied that there was any such "law merchant" and asserted that the ship was arrested by judgment of the Mayor of Bristol according to the custom of the town.

At first sight these pleadings would imply that Elyot had not made a voyage across the Atlantic in 1505. But this is not conclusive; for if, as may be inferred, his voyage to Seville was begun not earlier than August, it might have been undertaken after returning from America with the Portuguese before the 25th of that month. The method of chartering shipping is interesting and accords with many entries in the customs ledgers. If a number of merchants wished to employ a ship between them, one of them made himself responsible to the owner for all the charges. He was known as the cape merchant or head merchant, and sublet cargo space to the others. The law merchant or established custom evidently held the first shipper thus responsible. But Bristol had special maritime customs of its own; later in the Tudor period we find it exempt from the jurisdiction of the Admiralty Court.

William Clerk had further grievances against Hugh Elyot. He had expended considerable sums on his behalf, and his schedule of claims, which contains references to the transatlantic voyages, is printed in full in this volume.[2] There are items paid for rope, canvas, beer, flour and barrels to various men, including William Thorne of Bristol and Bartholomew Reed, alderman of London. The Company is twice mentioned: "Item, paid for the same Hugh [Elyot] to the Company Adventurers into the New Found Islands, £20"; and, "Item, for the losses [or costs] that the same Hugh caused the said William to have in the voyage for the Company Adventurers prepared into the New Found Lands, £4. 15*s*.". Altogether Clerk claimed £144. 18*s*. 8*d*. Unfortunately the date of the undertaking is not given, nor is it plain that the voyage in question was actually accomplished.

Another Chancery case suggests dissension in the Company, and perhaps indicates its break-up. Only the bill of complaint has survived, and it is undated. All that can be said, on internal evidence, is that it was subsequent to 1503.[3] The complainant was Francisco Fernandez. He stated that Hugh Elyot had brought an action against him for a debt

[1] *Ibid.*, No. 49.

[2] No. 46, The Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands.

[3] No. 47, Litigation between Hugh Elyot and Francisco Fernandez. For date, see footnote to the document.

of £100 in the Constable Court of Bristol. Fernandez denied liability and cited indentures that had passed between them. Nevertheless Elyot "of his malicious mind" was blocking the proceedings in order that Fernandez should remain in prison "against all right and good conscience". Fernandez therefore prayed for relief from the Court of Chancery, and offered to prove not only that he owed nothing to Elyot but that Elyot owed him £140. The outcome is not apparent. Apart from our present subject, the case is interesting as showing the Chancery Court in its early function as a tribunal of appeal for the oppressed who could find no remedy in the common law.

That is the last documentary reference so far discovered to the pioneer corporation of the British Empire. We do not know what were its primary objects. The evidence given in this chapter shows that in its early years it was active, had good hopes of success, and made a favourable impression upon the king. One thing is fairly certain, that the Newfoundland fishery was part of its field of operations. Its patent gave it control and the right to levy royalties on that enterprise. Tradition has it that the Bristol fishermen abandoned Iceland and frequented Newfoundland from the date of the discovery; but the records that would prove it are almost wholly lost. It is significant, however, that the Customs Account of 1503–4 is the first complete year's survey after the mid-fifteenth century that contains no mention of an Iceland voyage. An undated Navy paper of c. 1509–12 contains the note: "There be fair masts at Bristow", which may point to Newfoundland enterprise.[1]

A state paper of 1522 makes casual mention of the Newfoundland fishing-fleet as if it were a regular institution, and by that time it was not limited to Bristol.[2] One is left to guess whether the Company of 1502 was still taking toll of the proceeds or whether its patent had been annulled. As for the Cabots, their only known survivor, Sebastian, had quitted England in 1512. Hugh Elyot appears as late as 1505–7 as a royal official at Bristol.[3] The elder Robert Thorne lived into the reign of Henry VIII. The English had certainly no monopoly of Newfoundland. Portuguese, Spaniards and Frenchmen were all active there, and the records of such places as Plymouth and Southampton show that in the early sixteenth century a good deal of Newfoundland fish was bought by Englishmen in European ports.

[1] *Letters and Papers* (Henry VIII), Supplementary Vol. I, No. 12.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pt. ii, Nos. 2458, 2459.

[3] E. 405, 478, f. 9.

It remains to consider the maps of the early sixteenth century and to seek what light they can throw upon the Bristol voyages. I have reserved them to discussion apart from the documentary evidence because it is the only legitimate course to pursue. By taking a given map and applying it arbitrarily to a given voyage, testimony of a sort can be obtained. But it is quite unsound, for no map, other than that of Juan de la Cosa, is concerned to record the results of any definite English voyage. All that we can obtain is grouped results, and even so it is sometimes difficult to distinguish English discoveries from Portuguese.

First there must be mentioned a group of maps based apparently upon Portuguese information alone. These maps bear evidence of a political inspiration. They are concerned to show that the Newfoundland, Southern Labrador and Nova Scotia region has not only been first discovered by the Portuguese but is also within the longitudes assigned to their sphere of influence by the Treaty of Tordesillas. They ignore the prior discoveries of John Cabot, and they do not make it clear, as La Cosa does, that the Nova Scotia land continues south-westward as a continental coast in the direction of the Spanish West Indies. They show Greenland, with varying accuracy of outline, in approximately the correct position. There is little evidence to be obtained from them about the English discoveries from 1501 onwards.

The best-known of the group is the map made in Portugal by the Italian Albert de Cantino in 1502. It depicts Greenland with great accuracy both of outline and position, and ascribes its discovery to the Portuguese. South-west of Greenland, across an open sea (Davis Strait), appears a land inscribed Terra del Rey de Portuguall, which includes Southern Labrador and Newfoundland, shown as a continuous coast, deeply indented and fringed by small islands. This coast is placed east of the meridian of demarcation, which is drawn. A wide space of sea separates it from the Florida peninsula, which is far to the westward in the Spanish sphere.[1] There is no English information comprised in the map, and the contrast with La Cosa is remarkable. The map of Nicolas de Canerio, c. 1502–3, is of the same type, and records the discoveries of Gaspar Corte Real.[2] Its coasts of Greenland and Newfoundland bear Portuguese flags, but are not named. The map of Salvat de Pilestrina, c. 1503–4, otherwise known as Kunstmann No. III, gives the same general arrangement as in Cantino, but with a detailed scale of latitudes and a number of names

[1] The relevant part of the Cantino Map is reproduced in Chapter VII.

[2] Partially reproduced in K. Kretschmer, *Die Entdeckung Amerika's*, Atlas, Berlin, 1892, Plate VIII.

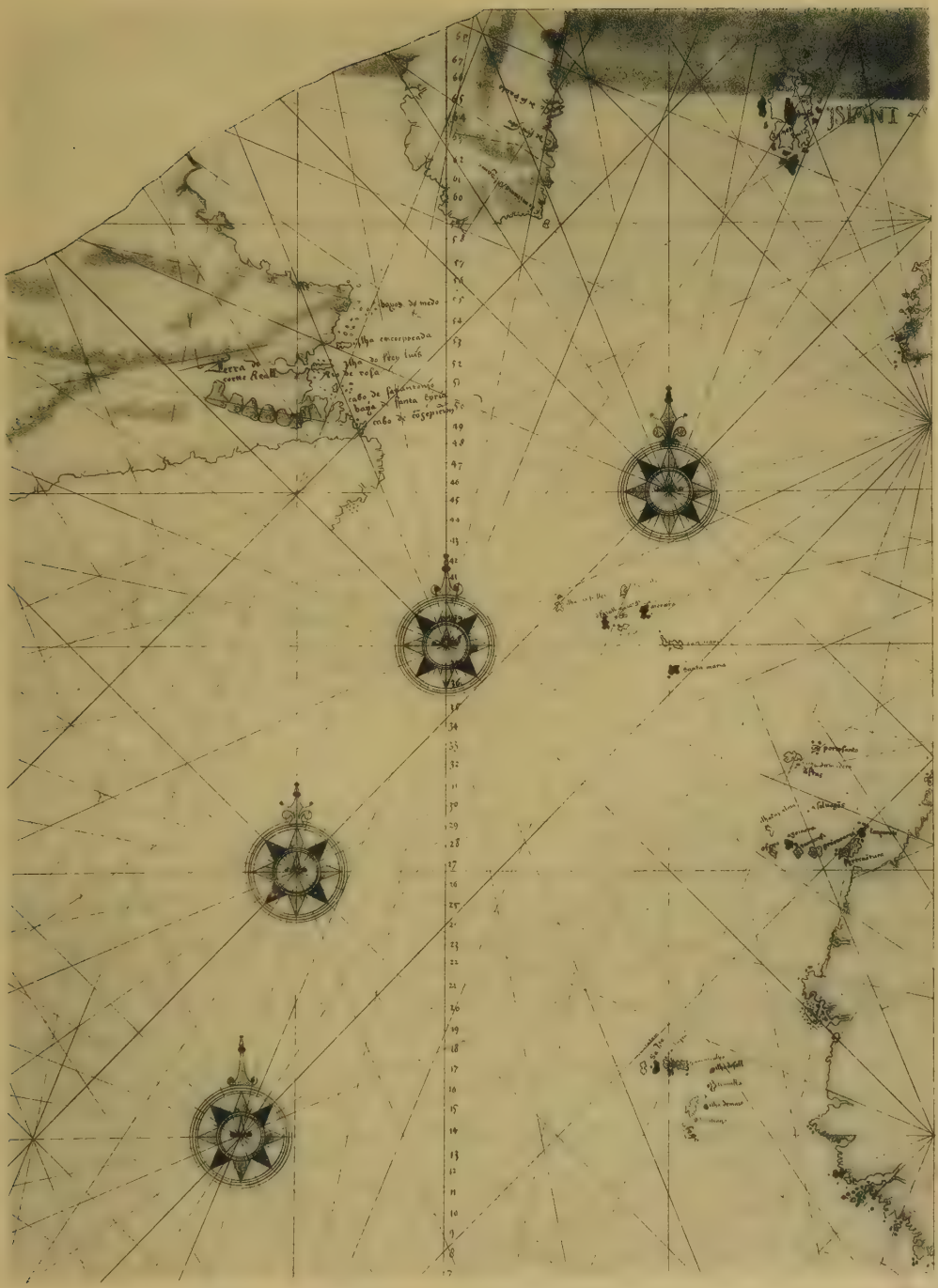
of coastal features.[1] The southern point of Greenland is correctly placed in lat. 58–9° N. The Labrador coast is well indicated right up to Hudson Strait in 61–2°, but the names upon it reach no farther north than 55°. These names are Portuguese, and the whole region is inscribed Terra de Cortte Reall. It is just possible that the northern extension of Labrador represents the Bristol discoveries from 1501. Although unnamed, it appears to be drawn from an actual mariner's chart. Another interesting feature is the continuation of the coast southwards from Newfoundland as far as 43–4° (the southern end of Nova Scotia). This has been inserted after the drawing of the rest of the map, and it likewise bears no names. It may also represent English discovery, but of this there can be no certainty. The map of Pedro Reinel, or Kunstmann No. I, c. 1506, exaggerates Greenland and reduces Davis Strait to a mere estuary. It gives names more freely in Labrador and Newfoundland, which, as in the preceding examples, are continuous; and it is the earliest map to show unmistakably the present Cabot Strait between Newfoundland and Cape Breton.[2] Kunstmann No. II is an anonymous map ascribed by Kretschmer to the date 1502, but perhaps drawn a little later.[3] It inscribes Labrador-Newfoundland as Terra de Corte Reall, but gives no names of details there. Its chief interest lies in Greenland, where there are seven names of details and the general title Terra de Lavorador. It is thus the earliest expression of the story that Greenland was discovered by the Azorean *llabrador* who was most probably João Fernandez; and since it is almost contemporary, it is good evidence.

In the British Museum there is an Italian atlas of approximate date of 1508–9. Its map of the North Atlantic is based on Portuguese information and has already been noted as the earliest map to assign the West Indies to approximately their correct latitude.[4] In the North West it shows Greenland under the name of "Terra de lebrados" and separates it from Labrador by a deep gulf representing Davis Strait, which looks as if copied from an explorer's chart. Labrador and Newfoundland are called "Terra de los bachalaos", and part of Nova Scotia is drawn but not named. The configuration of Davis Strait is very suggestive of an actual voyage of discovery, but whether English or Portuguese it is impossible to determine. The world-map at the beginning of this atlas, which

[1] Here reproduced from *Atlas zur Entdeckungsgeschichte Amerikas* by Friedrich Kunstmann and others, Munich, 1859, Plate III. This work contains excellent coloured reproductions of ancient maps preserved in Bavaria.

[2] In Kunstmann, *op. cit.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] Egerton MSS. 2803, ff. 8 b–9. See above, p. 196.



The Map of Salvat de Pilestrina, or Kunstmann No III.

shows the same North Atlantic information on a smaller scale, is reproduced in Chapter VI.

A printed world-map of 1506 was drawn by Giovanni Matteo Contarini, an Italian, and engraved at Florence. A copy was acquired and reproduced in facsimile by the British Museum in 1924. It has the north-western regions drawn somewhat after the Portuguese style, but very roughly and with only two names inserted. It makes Greenland continuous with Labrador by carrying a mainland across Davis Strait. It then continues the North American coast westwards and makes it part of the continent of Asia. The Spanish West Indies are shown half-way across the ocean between Europe and Cathay, and Cipango is drawn not far to the west of Cuba. The map was out-of-date in the year of its production and is valueless as evidence of English voyages. Its most useful purpose is to serve as an excellent illustration of John Cabot's ideas in 1497, as described in the letters of Pasqualigo and Soncino.[1]

The world-map of Johann Ruysch, 1507–8, is more interesting, not for its general design, which is similar to that described above, but on account of certain inscriptions which appear on it. It was engraved in 1508 and published as one of the plates in the edition of Ptolemy issued at Rome in that year and edited by Marcus Beneventanus.[2] According to the following statement by Beneventanus, Ruysch had sailed in person in one of the English expeditions from Bristol: "Johannes Ruysch indeed, a German, in my opinion the most skilful of geographers and the most diligent in depicting the world, whose knowledge we have used in the present work, has said that he has sailed from the southern part of England, and so far that he reached the parallel of 53 degrees from the equator towards the pole, and navigated on that parallel to the shores of the east [i.e. of Asia] by a hidden gulf,[3] and discovered many islands of which we shall provide the description below". To identify this voyage of Ruysch is an insoluble problem. At first sight it agrees very well with the expeditions of John Cabot, either in 1497 or 1498, especially if we allow that Cabot placed the latitude of his landfall some degrees too high. But on

[1] *A Map of the World designed by Gio. Matteo Contarini*, London, 1924. The relevant part is reproduced earlier in this volume.

[2] A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Fac-Simile Atlas*, Stockholm, 1889, p. 63, says the Ruysch map is sometimes found in the Ptolemy of 1507, but must have been inserted after publication.

[3] The Latin is *per angulum noctis*, which, if literally translated, yields no sensible meaning. I suggest the above translation as the figurative meaning that is intended. Cf. Winship, *Cabot Bibliography*, p. 91, and Harrisse, *Disc. of N. America*, p. 451.

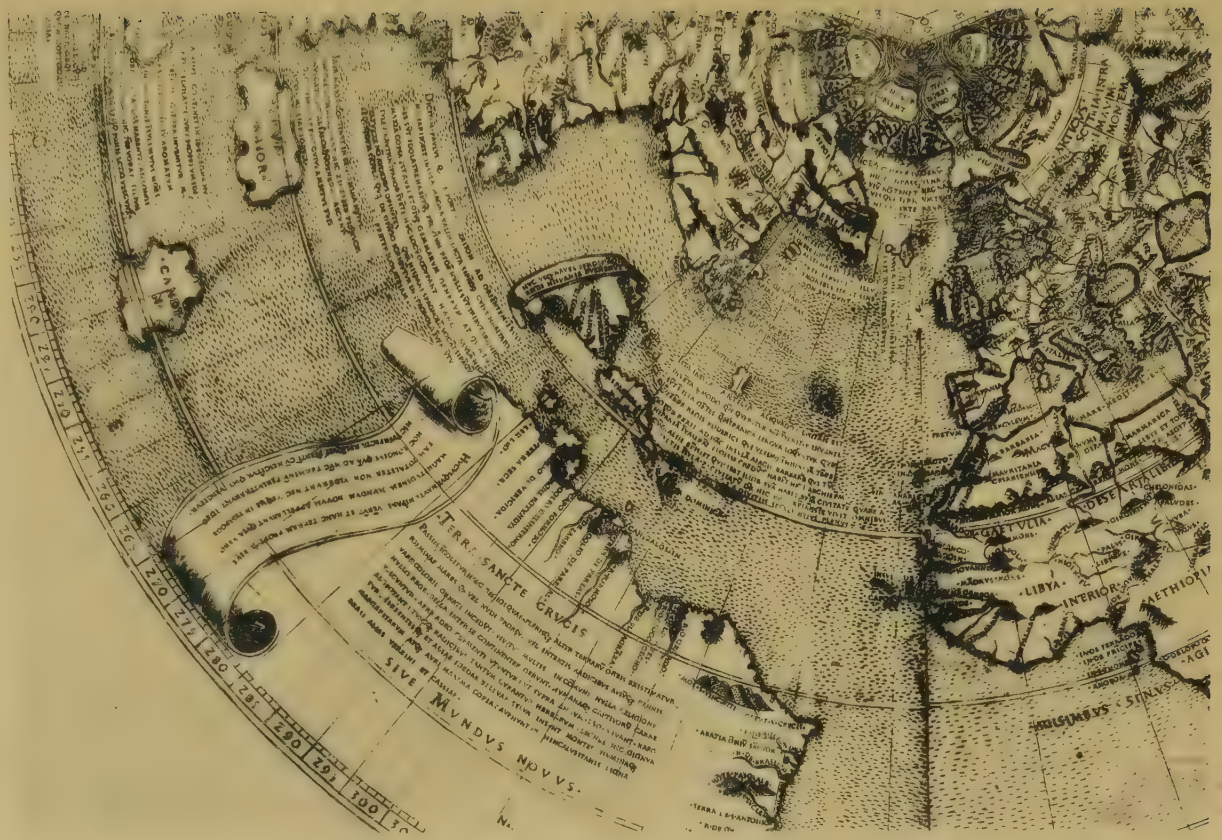
examining Ruysch's map we find that he has inserted no names at all upon the coastline which we know from La Cosa that Cabot explored. How could Ruysch have been so ignorant of the nomenclature if he accompanied Cabot? Furthermore, Ruysch does give some information about the more northerly regions that lay out of Cabot's track; he places three Latin inscriptions round the shores of Greenland, and a number of names on the Labrador-Newfoundland coast as far south as Cape Breton. These names, it is true, appear with one exception to be of Portuguese origin, and may have been taken from Portuguese maps; and the longer inscriptions (printed below) bear no evidence that they were the fruit of personal experience. If they were, the voyage of Ruysch was in the direction of Greenland and Labrador, and was of date 1501 or later.

The inscriptions are as follows: (i) (High upon the east coast of Greenland): "Here begins the Mare Sugenum. Here the ship's compass does not hold, neither can ships that contain iron turn backwards". (ii) (Attached to a small island between Iceland and Greenland): "This island in the year 1456 was totally burnt up". (iii) (Near two islands in the great bight representing Davis Strait, between Greenland and Labrador): "*Peiarū feie alias cibes dicūt.*[1] When sailors come to these islands they are bemused by demons so that they do not escape without peril". The Labrador-Newfoundland region is named Terra Nova, and the only name upon its coast which seems to be of English origin is Baia de Rockas; the others may well be Portuguese.

It will be seen from the above that Ruysch was repeating traditions which he could have acquired without visiting the regions himself. In fact, the first inscription, with the fable about the iron, is rather evidence that he had not been on the Greenland coast. The difficulty is to harmonize with his map his voyage in an English ship. For the map makes Greenland and the north-western lands a part of Asia, and it is hard to suggest what the English were doing in those parts unless they were searching for a North West Passage, which presupposes that the land was not Asia. On the other hand, as has been said, the map shows no acquaintance with John Cabot's doings. The conclusion must be that Ruysch copied an obsolete outline and put little or nothing of his own observations into his map. Perhaps he accompanied one of the Bristol expeditions which went no farther than the Newfoundland fishery. His "Terra Nova" suggests it, for that was a distinctively English appellation.

In 1527 the younger Robert Thorne illustrated his memorial to Dr Lee with a roughly drawn map of the world, which Hakluyt printed in his

[1] I cannot suggest any translation of these words.



The North Atlantic from the Map of Johan Ruysch

Divers Voyages of 1582. Thorne was in no large sense the author of this map, for he copied the outlines from existing printed material. But two of the inscriptions are generally believed to be his own. On a country which apparently represents Greenland, set over too far to the west and joined to America, he wrote: "Nova terra laboratorum dicta", thus making a confusion, not until that time perpetrated, between the Terra Nova and the Terra de Labrador. And along the whole coastline from Newfoundland to this Greenland he wrote: "Terra hec ab Anglis primum fuit inventa". In giving this description of Thorne's map I am following Dr Biggar, who is of opinion that the "New Land called Labrador" is meant to be Greenland. Although not prepared to deny it, I am not quite convinced, for Thorne shows in addition another and more clearly identifiable Greenland in its correct position close to Iceland and north-west of Scotland. There are other sixteenth-century maps which commit this error of making our Greenland into two distinct countries in different longitudes; and it is a strong argument that in most of the other maps of the early period the true Greenland is designated Labrador. Nevertheless, there remains a possibility that Thorne deliberately transferred the name of Labrador to the New Land of America, part of which is now known by that name. His outline is so badly drawn and his American latitudes are so hopelessly wrong as to afford no proof of identification. In any case, Thorne means to indicate that the coast explored by the English was that which ran north from Newfoundland, and his statement must apply to the Bristol voyages from 1501 onwards. His map, like his book, omits any mention of John Cabot, and the silence is more probably due to jealousy than to ignorance. His evidence supports the belief that some of the Bristol voyages were in the direction of Davis Strait.[1]

We may conclude by glancing at the "Inset" Map of Martin Waldseemüller, 1507,[2] the archetype of several later productions. It completely recognizes North America as a continent separate from Asia. But it shows its area as very small, about equal to France and Spain combined, with a northward extension to no more than 48° of latitude. Above that is open water with an apparently free passage to the Pacific, where Japan is located fairly close to the western American coast. This is an example of the work of the academic geographers, very common throughout the sixteenth century, who drew their maps to fit their arm-chair theories and

[1] There is, however, a possibility that the inscriptions on the map are not Thorne's evidence at all. They may have been inserted by the person who copied the map for Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages* in 1582. Thorne's original drawing has not been preserved.

[2] Reproduced in Chapter x.

ignored the information they might have obtained from the charts of navigators.

This survey of the cartographic record has been included in the account of the Bristol expeditions because it seems necessary to a complete treatment of the subject. But, valuable as the maps are for the history of the Corte Real voyages, it must be admitted that they add little to our knowledge of the English. That is because, with the doubtful exception of Ruysch and the almost valueless exception of Thorne, it is only Portuguese map-material that has survived. If we had the Bristol charts the story would be fuller. But they have perished in the general destruction of records which renders the last years of Henry VII the most poorly documented period of the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER IX

SEBASTIAN CABOT'S SEARCH FOR THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE

ON April 3, 1505, Henry VII issued two Privy Seal warrants, one to the Exchequer and the other to the customers of Bristol, ordering the payment of an annuity of £10 to "our well-beloved Sebastian Cabot, Venetian".[1] According to the evidence, for belief in which some reasons have already been given,[2] Sebastian was then about twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, and the occasion may quite possibly have been the death of John Cabot and the extinction of the £20 pension formerly granted to him. The wording of the 1505 document affords presumptive testimony that Sebastian Cabot had not up to that time conducted a voyage of discovery. The annuity is given "in consideration of the diligent service and attendance" that Sebastian has done "in and about...our town and port of Bristol". There is no hint of any voyage into the Arctic ice. Had such a voyage been performed, either its failure would have discredited the commander and rendered him ineligible for royal recognition, or its perils and hardships would have been cited as reasons for the reward he now obtained. They would have constituted a stronger claim than the mere diligent service ashore which the warrant does mention. The Privy Seal officials also, servants of precedent, would have found a phrase ready to their pens in the grant made three years before to Fernandez and Gonsalvez, "in consideration of the true service which they have done unto us, to our singular pleasure, as captains into he New Found Land". The present document was discovered by Professor Newton only in 1922, and no imputation lies upon the judgment of writers who before that date constructed their accounts of Sebastian Cabot's career in ignorance of it. Nevertheless, it does strengthen the case for a reconsideration of the date formerly accepted for Sebastian's North West voyage.

That date was 1497 or 1498, according as Sebastian's accounts were applied to the first or to the second expedition led by his father, and the glaring discrepancies involved in either attribution were explained on the ground that Sebastian was a vainglorious liar. That was notably the thesis of Henry Harrisse's *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1896), which reads as though its author was a personal enemy of the unfortunate Sebastian. Not until the publication of Mr G. P. Winship's *Cabot Bibliography* in 1900 was this view challenged. Mr Winship was the first to discern that the

[1] No. 48, Pension to Sebastian Cabot.

[2] See above, pp. 141–3.

Sebastian Cabot stories relate to a voyage totally different from those of John Cabot, and that among them there is contained evidence that its date was 1508–9. To him is therefore due the greatest advance in the critical treatment of the evidence. He propounded it so modestly that it has not everywhere received the attention it deserves.[1]

It will be convenient first to consider this question of the date. In the early part of this volume there are printed fifteen testimonies to Sebastian Cabot's voyage, some of comparatively slight importance, but every one containing some distinctive contribution to the problem. The majority of these accounts do not assign any date to the voyage, but there are some which do, and they are mutually contradictory. Two of them, printed respectively by the Venetian historian Ramusio in 1550 and by the Portuguese Galvano in 1563, assert that Sebastian led his expedition in 1496. That we know to be an improbable year for any such voyage, for the first of the series was made, according to the best evidence, by John Cabot in 1497. Now Galvano, as will presently be shown, was guilty of a muddle. His story is a composite one combining elements from John Cabot's pioneer expedition with others from Sebastian's Arctic adventure, and his date, if he had any valid ground for it, was drawn from the grant of the original patent to the Cabot family in 1496. As for the account printed by Ramusio and obtained by him from an unnamed gentleman of Mantua, it is a confusion of hearsay and demonstrable anachronisms emanating from a mind devoid of the chronological sense. That will be proved in full on a later page, and meanwhile I ask the reader provisionally to accept my assurance that its testimony to the date of 1496 is not worth serious consideration. Next we have an allusion to Sebastian Cabot in a description of Florida written by the Huguenot captain, Jean Ribault, in 1563. He says that the voyage was in 1498, but his details are those of an exploration of the present United States coastline, and not of the Arctic. We know that in 1498 such an exploration was made, although by John Cabot. Ribault therefore was correct in all but the name of the commander, and his statement is not good evidence about Sebastian Cabot's voyage. It must be remembered that none of the contemporary letters that form the basis of John Cabot's history were known in the mid-sixteenth century, and that many writers of that period had never so much as heard his name.

[1] I must here apologize for the very curt allusion made to Mr Winship's views in my own sketch of the subject in 1913. Although I had used his excellent bibliography I had culpably neglected to read his introductory essay. It was only as my book was in the press that I became aware of his analysis, and the result was its recognition only in a brief footnote.

Their transference of his exploits to his well-known son, but recently deceased, is therefore quite explicable.

As against the above challengeable statements we have four others of a different tenor. In 1524 Peter Martyr of Anghiera wrote that Sebastian Cabot had discovered the Baccalaos sixteen years earlier, i.e. in 1508. Martyr knew Cabot personally and had talked with him about his voyage as early as 1515. In 1536 Marcantonio Contarini presented to the Venetian Senate a report on Sebastian Cabot, whose career was of interest to that body. He stated that Sebastian was sent out to explore the Arctic by Henry VII, but that when he returned the king was dead and Henry VIII reigned in his stead. Henry VII died on April 21, 1509, and thus we have a clearly expressed testimony that 1509 or 1508–9 was the date of the voyage. This occurs, not in the writing of an irresponsible man of letters, but in the report of a Venetian official, a class whose standards of accuracy are known to have been high. Moreover, it was framed less than thirty years after the event, when Sebastian Cabot and other contemporaries were still living. The Venetian government had carried on direct negotiations with Sebastian Cabot in 1522, and it is likely that Contarini based his report of 1536 on details collected for the Signory at the earlier date. Its form renders it improbable that Martyr's statement furnished his information. In 1578 George Beste, one of Frobisher's captains, wrote a book on that commander's Arctic discoveries. In it he stated that Sebastian Cabot sailed to search for the North West Passage in 1508. Beste wrote some twenty years after Sebastian Cabot's death, which took place in England. Sebastian is known to have left maps and papers which have now disappeared but were seen by Elizabethan students. It is possible that Beste had the date from that source or alternatively from Peter Martyr's writing of 1524, which had been published in 1530.[1] The discrepancy between Martyr and Beste on the one hand and Contarini on the other is more apparent than real. In England the new year began on March 25, and if Sebastian had set sail even one day earlier an Englishman would have correctly stated the date as 1508; and Sebastian was by upbringing an Englishman, although of foreign birth. Lastly, in 1579

[1] It is not very probable that Beste had the date from Martyr. Richard Eden translated part of Martyr's book into English in 1555, but not the passage here important. That remained accessible only in Latin, and in Elizabeth's reign, although there were copies in Lord Lumley's library, the book was so rare that Richard Hakluyt had it reprinted, still in Latin, in 1587. Hakluyt altered the vital date to 1498. There was no English translation of the whole work until 1612. My authority is Winship's *Bibliography*, pp. 71–2.

Urbain Chauveton published a compilation on the New World in which he gave the date of Sebastian's voyage as 1507. That, while not agreeing with Martyr, Beste and Contarini, is somewhere near them; Chauveton cited Peter Martyr as his authority, and presumably made a slip in subtraction.

Chauveton alone may rank no higher in credibility than the writers who give 1496 or 1498 as the date. Martyr and Beste, owing to their opportunities and the general sobriety and accuracy of their work, are distinctly their superiors. Contarini must be allowed by the canons of good criticism to stand in the highest class of all, and his testimony is by itself worthy of credence. It is corroborated by Beste, who worked from a different source and could not have seen Contarini's report, which remained unpublished until 1892. I accept Mr Winship's conclusion that Sebastian Cabot sailed before, and returned after, April 21, 1509.

As in dealing with the problems of John Cabot, so in treating of Sebastian's voyage, it is hardly possible to separate analysis and criticism of the evidence from the narrative that can be extracted from it. I propose therefore to take the various testimonies one by one and estimate the value of each. The texts[1] should be read in conjunction with this account of them. It will be noted that there is not a single administrative document available for this voyage, neither is there from the pen of a contemporary observer in England any statement comparable to those letters of Soncino and Pasqualigo which have so clearly illuminated the story of John Cabot. It is natural that this should be so. Sebastian Cabot needed no new letters patent, since those granted in 1496 were a sufficient authority for his proceedings. He may, for all we know, have worked also under the patent of 1502, acting as the associate of its proprietors. The Privy Purse records of 1509 are extant, but contain no gratuity to him; that also was unnecessary, for he was already in receipt of a pension. The Bristol customs records, which might contain some scrap of information, have perished. As for the lack of any contemporary record of his return, that is paralleled by the similar silence on John Cabot's return in 1498. Neither father nor son had found the road to Asia, and the failures of each were thought unworthy of notice. Moreover, the London of 1509 was agog with other matters, the fall of Henry VII's ministers and the brilliant festivities of the new reign. These things were much more to the taste of contemporary quidnuncs than the pricking of a bubble of Cathay; it is only in the perspective of four centuries that a pioneer quest of the North West Passage is more important than the coronation ceremonies

[1] Nos. 49–64.

of Henry VIII. Our authorities therefore are nearly all of one kind. They are excerpts from the writings of historians of subsequent years. They are not of the highest class of evidence, for strictly speaking they are hearsay at second or third hand from their real author, Sebastian Cabot himself, recorded in a generation when the modern critical sense was undeveloped. To appreciate that point we have only to consider the sort of testimony that was then accepted in any law-court in Christendom. We must then expect omissions and discrepancies and do our best to extract the truth by entering with sympathy into the minds of the witnesses and estimating their several degrees of credibility. There can be no more glaring fault of criticism than to treat all the facts here recorded as of equal value and to arrive at a decision by counting them like votes. The testimonies are best considered in two groups; those emanating from Sebastian Cabot in the period 1512–48, when he lived in Spain and conversed with continental historians; and those obtained from his own mouth during his old age in England, or from the documents he left extant at his death.

Sebastian entered the Spanish service in 1512, and the first writer to deal with his English voyage is Peter Martyr of Anghiera, a man who moved in official circles at Seville. Martyr composed a work on discovery under the title *De Orbe Novo Decades*. He wrote the third Decade in 1515, and it was published at Alcala in the following year. He leads up to his account of Sebastian Cabot by a discussion of the supposed universal westward flow of all the ocean waters, and of the deductions that could be made therefrom.[1] The impression of this general ocean movement was of course erroneous; it was gathered from the Spaniards' observation of the westward current through the Caribbean. Martyr's inference from the phenomenon was that North and South America were probably not continuous and that a strait would be found leading westwards to Asia in the latitude of the Antilles. And it was for the discovery of this strait, "this secret of Nature hitherto hidden", that Sebastian Cabot was expecting the Spanish government to provide him with shipping in the following year, 1516.[2] As things turned out, the death of King Ferdinand postponed the expedition, and it was left for the Spaniards of Cuba to

[1] Sir Humphrey Gilbert's *Discourse* on the North West Passage contains a parallel argument.

[2] That it was the tropical strait is apparent, I hold, from a reading of the full context of Peter Martyr, which is printed above (No. 49). Harrisse, on the contrary, assumes that the proposed discovery of 1516 was that of the North West Passage (*J. and S. Cabot*, 1896, p. 155). The point is of some importance to a subsequent argument in the present chapter.

discover Mexico in 1517 and for Cortes to be its *conquistador* two years later. For Sebastian Cabot it was probably a lucky accident; from what we know of him he was not a Cortes, and he would have been much more likely to be eaten by the Aztecs than to conquer them.

Meanwhile Sebastian, as Martyr tells us, had already made a voyage in the service of England. He was a Venetian by birth, but had been taken whilst a child to England. There, when he grew up, he equipped two ships at his own cost and with three hundred men steered for the north until in the month of July he reached a latitude of almost continuous daylight. The sea was covered with masses of floating ice, although the land was clear. Baffled by the ice, he turned westwards to the American coast. He followed it southwards to the latitude of Gibraltar (36° N., about the position of Cape Hatteras) where he judged himself, quite correctly, to be in the longitude of Cuba. In passing down the American coastline he visited the Baccalaos, the fishing-grounds of Newfoundland; and Martyr, in saying that it was Sebastian who bestowed that name upon them, implies that he claimed to be their discoverer. But, concludes Martyr, there are Spaniards who say that Sebastian Cabot was not the first finder of the Baccalaos and deny that he went so far westwards.

There we have an intelligible outline of the voyage from a man who had recently received it from Sebastian's own lips. It does not explain the explorer's own ultimate objective, neither does it give the date; but everything else fits together quite consistently. We miss all mention of John Cabot, and in that omission lies the gravest charge that has been levelled at Sebastian's character. It has been said that he suppressed his father's fame and appropriated his achievements. The second count is untrue. The first is but partially true. Sebastian never, until he wrote the legend on the map of 1544 (if he did write it), caused any word to be published on what his father had done. But in 1515 that hardly amounted to suppression, for the facts were known. It is out of the question that the Spanish colonial officials, who had been so exercised by John Cabot's proceedings in 1498, had forgotten them seventeen years afterwards. One might almost as well suggest that the Royal Geographical Society in 1929 is likely to have forgotten that Amundsen reached the South Pole in 1911. I have no doubt that Peter Martyr knew the truth, and out of complaisance to his friend Sebastian abstained from printing it. He does let out a hint that there was thought to have been a prior discoverer. We must remember two things, that Sebastian Cabot was expecting the command of an important expedition and was not anxious to advertise any discoveries but his own; and that Peter Martyr, as his context shows, introduces the whole

Sketch-map based upon Egerton MSS. 2803, pp. 7b-8, to illustrate the theory of an inter-continental strait. The dotted outlines are as shown in the original.

story, not as a piece of systematic history, but as an allusion bearing on the theory of a strait through the Gulf of Mexico. Sebastian has been on the American coast and has something pertinent to say about the sea currents there. The rest follows quite casually, and the writer is under no obligation to talk of John Cabot, from whom he has obtained no information.

Peter Martyr added to his work in subsequent years, and wrote his seventh Decade in 1524. That, as has been mentioned, contains the date of the voyage, again in a mere allusion to the Newfoundland region, "Bacchalaos anno ab hinc sexto decimo ex Anglia per Cabotum repertos". The reference is to Sebastian and the meaning is that he found the Baccalaos about the year 1508. Here there is a more apparent *suggestio falsi*, but Martyr might plead that "found" was not equivalent to "first found". If the latter had been his intention the word *primum* would not have ruined his sentence. Even at the worst there is no especial spite against John Cabot. The suppression is not merely of him, but of Gaspar and Miguel Corte Real and of everyone else who had been to Newfoundland between 1497 and 1508—at least a score of commanders if we count the Bristol men and the French and Portuguese fishermen who are known to have resorted to the Baccalaos. To suggest that there was a plot to falsify all this history would be rather silly.

There is yet another testimony linked with the name of Peter Martyr. In 1534 there was published at Venice a *Summario* of the history of the West Indies, of which Ramusio is believed to have been the editor. Its title says that it is drawn from Peter Martyr's and many other relations. It gives the substance of the 1515 account above described, with certain additions. One of them is to the effect that Sebastian Cabot prepared his expeditions on the death of his father, who is not described as a navigator. Another gives the latitude in which ice stopped progress in 55°, from which point Sebastian is said to have followed the American coast southward until at the region of the fishery it turned to the west. This gives a good indication of the trend of the Labrador, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia coastlines, especially if allowance is made for a westward variation of the compass. The latitude given, however, does not coincide with that which we shall find in other accounts. It may by some confusion represent, not the farthest north attained, but the point at which Sebastian touched the Labrador coast. The statement that these events originated with John Cabot's death gives colour to the suspicion that he survived until 1505. Sebastian may have set about his preparations from the time when he received his pension grant from Henry VII. On the whole, these

additions to Martyr's original story look as if they were not mere embroideries but came from some authority now untraceable.

We come now to a remarkable statement generally known as the Mantuan Gentleman's discourse and printed in 1550 in the first volume of Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Navigationi et Viaggi*. Ramusio says that some months before the time of writing he had been one of a party of four who had talked at a country house about voyages of discovery. Another of the party was a Mantuan gentleman of great eminence, whose name "out of respect" he does not mention. The Mantuan related that some years previously he had had an interview with Sebastian Cabot at Seville and had heard from him the following story. John Cabot (said Sebastian) had died in England at the time the news arrived of Columbus's discovery of the West Indies. The English court was much interested in this exploit, which was believed to be the attainment of the spice-regions of the East. Thereupon Sebastian Cabot, knowing by study of the globe that if he sailed north-west he would find a shorter route to the Indies, laid the idea before Henry VII. It was, so far as he [Sebastian] remembered, in 1496, and the king placed two ships at his disposal. Sebastian steered for the north-west expecting a clear passage to Cathay, but came against a coast which ran north and south and barred his progress. This was in latitude 56°. He turned southwards and explored the coast as far as Florida in the hope of finding a strait to the Indies. He had no success, and came back to England, where the government was preoccupied with rebellions and a Scottish war. Seeing that there was no hope of another voyage, Sebastian therefore came to Spain, where Ferdinand and Isabella[1] received him kindly and sent him to explore Brazil, in the course of which journey he discovered the River Plate. After that he made many other voyages, and now being old was giving younger sailors a chance to prove their mettle; "and now here I am with this charge which you know of [Pilot-Major of Spain], enjoying the fruits of my labours".

[1] "The Catholic King and Queen Isabella." It has been suggested that this means Charles V, one of whose wives was named Isabella. I believe the idea is inadmissible. An Italian speaking in the lifetime of Charles V would inevitably have referred to him as "the Emperor". The title of "Catholic King" was for Charles V a local and subsidiary one, but it was the common designation of King Ferdinand. Its use by Sebastian Cabot or the Mantuan can only point to Ferdinand; and it was in fact in Ferdinand's time that Sebastian went to Spain. Charles V's Isabella, again, was a mere queen (or empress) consort, whereas Ferdinand's Isabella was Queen of Castile in her own right, and the fount of authority for the Castilian colonies. The mention of her name is natural, whereas that of the Emperor's wife would have been unnecessary.

For sheer anachronistic nonsense this is hard to beat. It tells us that John Cabot died in 1493, that Henry VII believed the discovery of Columbus to be the coast of Asia and therefore sent Sebastian to find a North West Passage round it so as to arrive at Asia, that Sebastian failed in this in 1496 and consequently passed over to Spain (which we know to have been in 1512), and that Queen Isabella (who actually died in 1504) and King Ferdinand (who died in 1516) helped to equip him for the expedition to the River Plate, which he really accomplished in 1526. The Mantuan worthy had treasured all this in memory for some years before his talk with Ramusio, and Ramusio in his turn wrote it down some months later still. Poor Ramusio, when he came to put it on paper, felt a little doubtful, as he confesses; and well he may. One may suspect there was wine at that house-party. The yarn is worth exactly nothing, and I should hesitate to waste space on it had it not on occasion been taken seriously and used as a stick to belabour Sebastian Cabot for lying. Sebastian had no doubt entertained his distinguished visitor with large discursive talk on voyages, flitting from place to place on the great world-map before them, and dipping here and there into his variegated career. We have all heard veterans talk like this, and they are usually not specific on dates and the connexion of events. The Mantuan had listened reverently and remembered perhaps one fact in ten. Years afterwards he had found at the country house an audience as foolish as himself. He was suddenly an authority, and delivered an impressive discourse. And last of all Ramusio put together what he could recollect of it, tested not a single date, and enshrined it in the three-volume folio that forms his title to fame. Whether the mess was made by the Mantuan or Ramusio or both it is idle to speculate. As Harrisse says, "It would be difficult to throw into a few sentences a greater number of erroneous statements and anachronisms". But to blame it, as he does, on Sebastian Cabot is uncritical.

In his third volume, published six years after the first,[1] Ramusio summarized a letter on the voyage, which he had received from Sebastian Cabot himself. It was to the effect that Sebastian had sailed to the North West at the costs of Henry VII, and had passed by the islands along the American coast until on June 11 (year not stated) he had reached the latitude of 67½°. He had found the sea open before him and believed he could have sailed on to Cathay, but the master and mariners insisted on turning back. On another page Ramusio inserts a brief note that Sebastian had reached the latitude of 67° and had been turned back by

[1] Although numbered Vol. III, it was the second to be printed, in 1556. Vol. II did not appear until 1559.

the cold. Once again we may believe Ramusio fails us. For he had in his hand a narrative from Sebastian's own pen, the only one known to have been written, and he did not print it. All he gives is an imperfect summary. Nevertheless its scanty contents, of the object of the voyage, the course up the Labrador coast, the date in June, the latitude reached, and the mutiny of the crew, must be taken as a near approach to the explorer's personal evidence. Ramusio says he had received this letter "many years ago". "Many" must mean six or less, for it is clear that he had not this information when he published his first volume. That being so, the letter was quite conceivably Sebastian's protest and correction of the Mantuan's rubbish therein retailed; which may explain why Ramusio did not care to print it in full.

In 1552 there was published in Spain the *General History of the Indies* by Francisco Lopez de Gomara. This man was secretary to Hernan Cortés in the years after 1540 when that veteran lived in Spain, and consequently moved in circles where good information about discoveries was likely to be obtained. Gomara repeats Martyr's facts about the two ships and the three hundred men. He is more definite on the object of the voyage; it was "to go by the north to Cathay, and to bring thence spices in a shorter time than the Portuguese did by the south", and also to reconnoitre the prospects of a settlement in the Indies. Cabot steered by way of Iceland to "the cape of Labrador" in 58°. Gomara evidently used Labrador in its original signification of Greenland, for Cape Farewell is within a degree of the latitude he mentions. By the explorer's own account, continues Gomara, a much higher latitude was reached, and then in the month of July ice stopped further progress. After this Cabot turned to the west, coasted down to the Baccalaos, and even farther to 38° N., and thence returned to England. Gomara gives a fairly accurate latitude ($48\frac{1}{2}°$) for the Baccalaos as well as getting Greenland nearly right, and so inspires us to trust his credibility. He may possibly have had some of his details from Sebastian Cabot in person.

Very different is the account next published, in *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique, autrement nommé Amérique*, by André Thevet, afterwards cosmographer-royal of France, in 1558. Thevet had been in Brazil with Villegagnon's expedition, and had sailed home by way of the West Indies and the Newfoundland region. He had thus some first-hand knowledge of discovery, but he was a wretched historian with a thoroughly confused method of presentation. He says that Sebastian Cabot proposed to Henry VII to open a spice-trade with Cathay by the north-west, in which project he failed. Thevet may thus far be drawing upon Gomara. But

he adds two details of his own. One is that Sebastian intended to establish an English colony in Peru, and the other that he put three hundred men on shore in the far north "in the direction of Iceland", where the cold killed nearly all of them. Dates meant nothing to André Thevet, and my own conjecture is that these last items refer to projects of the reign of Edward VI. By that time Sebastian Cabot was again in England devising schemes of expansion to relieve economic distress by finding new markets for English cloth. Now in the period 1551–3 the Duke of Northumberland considered a plan to raid the Spanish colonies in Peru in co-operation with the French corsairs who had already been pillaging the West Indies for a generation. It was the exploit afterwards performed by Drake in 1578–9, although Northumberland proposed to attack Peru by way of the Amazon basin. At the earlier date the idea came to nothing, and all we know of it is by a letter in which Sebastian Cabot betrayed it to Charles V.[1] Some consultation with the French is obviously indicated, and it is possible that Thevet and Cabot were employed in the negotiations. In another passage in his book[2] Thevet speaks of the land on the south side of the Straits of Magellan and says that he has heard about it from a certain English pilot "a man as much esteemed and experienced in sea affairs as one could find", who has been in the strait. Was that man Sebastian Cabot? It is very probable. He had not been in the Straits, but he had been near them in 1526, and must have learnt all the Spanish information about them. Thevet calls him an Englishman, and there was no other English pilot available who, to our present knowledge, had been anywhere near these southern regions. It certainly looks as though Thevet met Cabot in England and, in retailing the Peru project in 1558, was speaking of quite recent history. In any event there could have been no Peru project under Henry VII, for the name and the country were alike unknown. As for three hundred men frozen in the north, that may be another of Thevet's anachronisms, for Sebastian Cabot was Governor of the company which sent out Sir Hugh Willoughby to perish in Russian Lapland in 1553. There were not three hundred men engaged, and Sebastian did not go with them, but it is near enough for our cosmographer-royal. The number is probably an echo of Gomara and Peter Martyr.

With the *Tratado* of Antonio Galvano, published at Lisbon in 1563, we are faced with a much simpler and less delirious muddle. Galvano says that in 1496 a Venetian named Sebastian Cabot approached Henry VII

[1] Navarette, *Colección de documentos inéditos*, Vol. III, p. 512. The letter is dated Nov. 15, 1554, but Northumberland had been executed in August, 1553.

[2] P. 292 of the modern edition by P. Gaffarel, Paris, 1878.

with a plan for discovery of lands in the latitude of England. The king gave him two ships and three hundred men, and he sailed westwards to land in 45° N. Thence he pushed northwards to 60° where he was beaten by the cold. He turned in the reverse direction and explored the same coast down to 38°, or "others say" to the Cape of Florida in 25°, examining every bay and creek to see if it might be a strait. In this account the two ships, the three hundred men, the explorer's name, and the objective of a strait are recognizable features of Sebastian Cabot's voyage. But no other historian represents that Sebastian sailed west (or even west by south) in the first place, and afterwards coasted America towards the north. The trustworthy accounts all agree that the course was north-west until ice checked progress, and that only then did the coasting of America begin. It is plain either that Galvano took the landfall in 45° from a story of John Cabot that cannot now be traced—perhaps the personal recollection of some veteran of the Fernandez-Gonsalvez fraternity who had been contemporaries with John at Bristol long before—or that he had it from the map of 1544, which placed the landfall at Cape Breton. The latter alternative is the less to be preferred because Galvano's date, 1496, is a stumbling-block. The Paris Map, it may be remembered, gives the erroneous date 1494, and another edition of it gave 1497. Galvano is the only Portuguese among our authorities, and it is more likely that he was given date and landfall by one of his compatriots. The date is explicable as that of John Cabot's letters patent. About Sebastian's voyage Galvano gives us nothing exclusive to himself save the highest north latitude of 60° and the lowest south of 25°, neither of them corroborated, and neither at all attractive, on account of the errors by which they are accompanied.

The last of the continental historians is Urbain Chauveton, who published his *Histoire Nouvelle du Nouveau Monde* in 1579. Chauveton's work is mainly based on a book by the Milanese writer Benzoni, which, however, does not contain the passage on Sebastian Cabot. Chauveton states briefly that the voyage was made in 1507, that the objective was a northern passage to Cathay, and that the highest latitude attained was 67° N. He mentions the discovery of the Baccalaos, but does not say whether it took place before or after the penetration of the Arctic seas. Chauveton ascribes his details to Peter Martyr, but they are in fact drawn from other sources, perhaps from Ramusio and Galvano, except the date, which is peculiar to Chauveton himself. He very possibly obtained that by miscalculating Martyr's subtraction of sixteen years from 1524. Apart from his date, Chauveton would not be worth mentioning as an independent witness.

The earliest of the English writers who knew Sebastian Cabot after his return to England in 1548 is Richard Eden. In 1555 Eden published a translation of Peter Martyr's first three Decades. It contained the account written by Martyr in 1515 and already discussed in this chapter. In the Preface there is also an allusion to North America by Eden himself: "But Cabot touched only in the north corner and most barbarous part thereof, from whence he was repulsed with ice in the month of July". Although Eden knew Cabot personally there is in this no more information than is supplied by Peter Martyr.

Jean Ribault the Frenchman must rank for our purpose among the English authorities. He wrote his *Discovery of Terra Florida* in England in 1562–3, and it was first published in the English language; indeed, no French edition has yet been traced. Ribault's allusion to the Cabot discoveries is important only for the date, 1498, attributed to them, and it has already been dealt with. His authority is not apparent, unless it was Richard Eden. Eden was certainly associated with Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the Huguenot leaders in 1562–3,[1] and he may have told Ribault something which was based on the conversations of the lately deceased Sebastian Cabot.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert gives us something more definite and reveals one of the sources of his information. Gilbert wrote his *Discourse* on the feasibility of the North West Passage before 1566, although it was not printed until 1576. He says that certain charts made by Sebastian Cabot were to be seen in the Queen's Gallery at Whitehall, and that these charts showed a strait or passage "on the north side of Terra de Labrador"; and furthermore, that Sebastian himself affirmed that he had navigated this strait westward in the latitude of 67½° until on the 11th of June, although the way was clear before him to Asia, the mutiny of his crews forced him to turn back. Two points in this require comment. The first is that these charts of Sebastian Cabot were not copies of the map of 1544 (the Paris Map now extant), which shows nothing of the sort. They were works which have now perished, but to which we have other allusions in the writings of Richard Willes and Richard Hakluyt. The second is that Gilbert's further details bear a strong resemblance to those printed by Ramusio in his third volume, on the authority of a letter he had received from Sebastian Cabot. That letter was probably written, as I have shown, after 1550, in Sebastian's second English period, and represents his story as he gave it at that time. It is therefore clear that Sebastian

[1] *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. I (1929), Ch. III, by Prof. A. P. Newton, p. 54.

in his old age was asserting that he had formerly found the North West Passage, and that he was constructing maps to illustrate his claim. Whether the details of latitude, date and mutiny were inscribed as a legend on these lost maps, or whether Gilbert derived them solely from reading Ramusio's book, must be left undetermined; but probably the latter is the true explanation.

Richard Willes, in his *History of Travel in the East and West Indies* (1577), is much more circumstantial and gives us some information not found elsewhere. Willes refers to a map by Sebastian Cabot which was preserved at the Earl of Bedford's house at Cheynies. The map showed a North West Passage in the latitudes 61–64° N., and on it there was quite definitely inscribed a "discourse" or statement by Cabot himself. Its effect was that Cabot had entered this strait and knew that it continued of "the same breadth" (three degrees) for about ten degrees of longitude westwards, and that then it opened southerly more and more until it came under the Tropic of Cancer and ran into the Pacific Ocean, at which point it was eighteen degrees wide. Reference to a modern map will show this to be a very remarkable statement. The opening of Hudson's Strait at Cape Chidley is just above the sixtieth parallel, the Strait does continue for "about" ten degrees of longitude (actually twelve to thirteen); and it does then open out southwards into Hudson's Bay, which Hudson himself thought was the main Pacific Ocean. Either Sebastian Cabot had made an extraordinarily correct guess, or he had really been through Hudson's Strait and had seen, in mid-June, the broad expanse of waters beyond, which he pardonably mistook for the Pacific. Why had he never said this so clearly to Peter Martyr and his other continental friends before 1548? The answer must be that when he talked to Martyr in 1515 he was hoping to be sent on a quite different quest, that of a strait westwards through the Gulf of Mexico, and he did not care to confuse the issues. Afterwards, as Pilot-Major of Spain, he did let out hints, but he had to be reticent, for Spaniards realized that they were not cut out for Arctic work, and a trade through the North West Passage by others would have been prejudicial to their interests. I shall show in a later chapter that Sebastian did offer this discovery to others, although not to Spain. But it throws a new light on the mentality of this alleged vainglorious braggart that, firmly believing he had been in the Pacific, he kept silence to his Spanish masters for close on forty years about a secret that would potentially alter the balance of power of the European world.

In 1578, the year after Willes had published his book, George Beste produced the story of Frobisher's voyages. Either he had not seen the

Modern outline of Hudson's Strait and Bay and adjacent coasts.

map described by Willes, or he did not choose to mention it. In the latter case Beste's silence is explicable. He was one of Frobisher's men, and it would have been mortifying to admit that he and his commander had been anticipated seventy years before. Beste therefore describes Sebastian Cabot's voyage merely as an intention (the old sense of the word "pretend") to find a passage to Cathay, and actually as a coasting of the American shores in the region of the Baccalaos. His contribution is valuable only for the date, 1508, which he assigns to the adventure.

Lastly we have a note by Richard Hakluyt upon Sebastian Cabot's papers. In *Divers Voyages* (1582) Hakluyt promised that there should shortly appear in print all Sebastian's own maps and discourses. They were at the moment in the keeping of William Worthington, who is known to have been a personal associate of Cabot; and Worthington was willing to have them "overseen and published in as good order as may be". The promise was never fulfilled, and the documents have disappeared. It has been suggested that Worthington disloyally sold them to a Spanish agent. There is not an atom of evidence, and the idea is fanciful. A better guess—and it is only a guess—is that when Hakluyt came to examine them and to compare them with Frobisher's discoveries, he found that in some way they weakened instead of strengthening the case for the North West Passage as it was promoted in the 1580's. John Davis in 1585–7 did not think the problem would be solved by way of Frobisher's Sound. Davis had other views and found difficulty enough in raising money to try them. It was important not to distract effort by advertising a rival route; and Hakluyt was a propagandist first and a historian afterwards. On quite other matters he is known to have suppressed inconvenient stories.[1] Perhaps he did so here. But again it is only a guess.

The above constitutes all the information so far discovered on this much-misrepresented voyage of Sebastian Cabot. The date of his setting forth was clearly in the last year of Henry VII, but whether in the spring of 1509, just before the king's death, or in the previous season of 1508, cannot be determined. The return, according to the explicit statement of Contarini, was after Henry VIII had come to the throne. If Cabot started in 1508 it follows therefore that he wintered somewhere on the American coast. None of the accounts suggests such a proceeding. On the other hand the distance covered represents a large although not impossible amount of work for one season. We must read 1508 in its old sense, of the year extending to March 24, 1509, as our present reckoning would give it.

[1] See the present writer's *Sir John Hawkins* (1927), p. 404.

Perhaps it is more probable that the expedition set sail some time in that month of March.

All the accounts which touch on the point agree that Sebastian had two ships and three hundred men. These figures were first given by Peter Martyr, and it is possible that the others merely copied him. But, allowing for that possibility, Peter Martyr alone is a good witness to Sebastian's earliest statements. The three hundred men are an abnormally large number, and two ordinary ships would have been overcrowded with them. By the Navy practice of the period, even for hand-to-hand fighting close to the English coast, these men would have been spread over 400 to 450 tons of shipping and it would have been impossible to victual them for any great duration of voyage. It is conceivable that Cabot's ships were each of 200 tons or more, but not altogether likely. There is therefore a difficulty in accepting his figures. If he had anything like this number of hands it is fairly evident that the majority were not sailors but colonists, and that he proposed to plant a settlement somewhere on the route to Cathay. André Thevet, if we may attach any weight to his jumbled statement (which I am inclined to doubt), does give a hint of some such thing. My own belief is that there is exaggeration in the figures. It is hard to credit that Sebastian Cabot, after all the experience of the North West that had been gained at Bristol, would have launched into the unknown with a crowd that he could not feed for more than a few weeks.

In tracing the course followed by the expedition it must be realized that two different stories are told in the two main categories of the evidence —that furnished by Sebastian Cabot during his Spanish period, and that given by him after his return to England. In the former category we must neglect Galvano's account, which is a composite, and the Mantuan Gentleman's, which is rubbish. That leaves us with Peter Martyr and Gomara as the leading narrators of the early period. According to them Sebastian sailed first to Cape Farewell in Greenland, possibly pushed farther up the Greenland coast on its western side, was foiled by ice in July, and then turned west to the Baccalaos.

The post-1548 accounts (of which the chief are Ramusio's in his third volume, Sir Humphrey Gilbert's, and that of Richard Willes) do not mention this sighting of Greenland, although nothing that they record is incompatible with it. Ramusio says simply, on the authority of a letter written by Cabot, that the explorer reached a maximum latitude of $67\frac{1}{2}°$ on June 11, and believed the sea was open to Cathay. That might mean that the farthest north was some way up Davis Strait, where Davis himself found open water in 1587 as high as 72°. But Sir Humphrey Gilbert

speaks of something very different, and implies that if Cabot touched Greenland he did not continue up its coast, and that his farthest north lay elsewhere. Gilbert's authority for the route is a Cabot chart seen by him at Whitehall. His latitude and date are the same as those given by Ramusio; he may have found them inscribed on the chart in addition to having read them in Ramusio's book. But in speaking of the route he is certainly following the chart, and he says quite explicitly that the explorer passed "on the north side of Terra de Labrador". The vital question is, what did Gilbert mean by Labrador? And it is answered by his famous *Discourse*, which shows that he applied the word as we now do, to the American coast above Newfoundland. He refers repeatedly to Greenland under its present name—he spells it "Gronland"—and on the other hand he identifies Labrador with Terra Nova. In one passage he names both countries: "Gronland is distant from Lappia 40 leagues, and from Terra de Labrador, 50". In another he alludes to Jacques Cartier as having been on the coast of Labrador. The Cabot chart which Gilbert saw therefore indicated that Sebastian Cabot coasted by the north side of our Labrador, which implies that he passed through Hudson's Strait and then attained the latitude of 67½°; and that, if true, would have brought him into Foxe Channel, where Luke Foxe in 1631 reached "Foxe his Farthest" in 67°.

Richard Willes, who saw a different map of Cabot's in the possession of the Duke of Bedford, is more explicit about this strait, and removes any doubt of its identity. He places its mouth in 61–64° and says it continues westward. His further remark, "it openeth southerly more and more until it come under the Tropic of Cancer, and so runneth into Mar de Zur", indicates that Sebastian had seen a considerable part of Hudson's Bay and imagined the rest. Whether the examination of Hudson's Bay was before or after reaching 67½° N. is not apparent.

These considerations make it clear that in his post-1548 period Sebastian Cabot *claimed* to have passed through what we call Hudson's Strait and to have seen the great water beyond, which he believed to be an arm of the Pacific Ocean. And, as has been shown, his reasons for not having told the full story to Peter Martyr and the Spaniards are intelligible. We have now to consider whether Sebastian told the truth in his old age, or whether he invented the whole thing. Well, to put it plainly, if he was lying he had the devil's own luck. For we know now that the facts are substantially as he represented them. Let us resume them. According to Willes, Cabot said: the strait's mouth is in 61–64°; the strait covers ten degrees of longitude to the westward; it then turns south and opens out

to eighteen degrees wider than its mouth, or twenty-one degrees in all. The modern map shows: the strait's mouth in 60½°, less than a degree wide, but opening out to two degrees just inside; the strait covers thirteen degrees of longitude west-north-westwards; Hudson's Bay, after turning south, opens out to sixteen degrees of longitude in its widest part. Obvious sources of error to account for the discrepancies are: unreliability of the magnetic compass in the far north; longitudes obtainable only by dead reckoning; errors by Cabot in drawing his chart; errors by Willes in reading it. Putting all together, what must we believe? What else but that Sebastian Cabot did make this discovery? It was an achievement that places him on a level with Henry Hudson and Luke Foxe—nay, higher, for he had far less previous knowledge to build upon.

We have to face the fact that the English of Edward VI's reign did not show much belief in him. They brought him over from Spain in 1548 to organize the discovery of a route to Asia, and they made him Governor of the company formed for that purpose. But when that company sent out its first expedition under Sir Hugh Willoughby in 1553, the direction chosen was by the North East. The North West must have been discussed, and indeed it was included in the company's monopoly, but success by that way was not expected as it would have been had full trust been placed in Cabot's story. The reasons, I think, lie in the history of the previous years. Henry VIII, at first indifferent to discovery, had afterwards been converted. He had believed in Sebastian Cabot, and had proposed in 1521 to send him out to Cathay. The scheme fell through, but in 1527 an English captain, John Rut, tried the North West Passage and failed. Another expedition also failed in 1536, and thereafter the plan was discredited. That must be held to account for the choice of the untried North East in 1553. Old Cabot knew, or thought he knew, that the North West Passage existed, but he pleaded in vain. His contemporaries, who had not seen our modern proofs, lacked faith.

After Hudson's Bay the rest of his voyage is an anti-climax. Although he believed that the Pacific was under his keel, he could not go on. The sea might be comparatively free, but there was floating ice and hardship illimitable. His men, like Hudson's, had had enough of it. But he had no need yet to admit failure. If there was one North West Passage there might be others. Eighty years afterwards the English could still believe that "the north parts of America are all islands", and there was no reason why Cabot should not think that possible in 1509. His father had passed numerous inlets without probing them, for he had not been looking for a strait; he had thought he was already on the coast of Cathay. Sebastian

therefore made southwards down the Labrador seaboard to Newfoundland, and thence down the old road of 1497 to 38° N., looking everywhere for some passage that should lead to the west. This we have in the relevant part of Galvano's story: "they passed along...discovering every bay, river and creek to see if it passed to the other side". The other pre-1548 accounts record the coasting without specifying its motive. Only then, having failed to discover any more temperate passage, did Sebastian Cabot return to England, to find Henry VII dead, and the air thick with spirited foreign policies and rumours of war.

He remained three more years in England, but found no countenance for his plans. In 1512 he went to Spain with the Marquis of Dorset's army for the invasion of Guienne. As a geographer he had found a petty employment in preparing a map of the theatre of war.[1] But two marks for "making of a card of Gascoigne and Guyon", were poor encouragement to one who dreamed of sailing to Cathay. In Spain he got into touch with the colonial authorities and transferred himself to their service, with the permission of his immediate commander Lord Willoughby.[2] At Seville he found talk of a passage westward from Cuba through what we know as the Gulf of Mexico. It was a region that had been closed to him whilst under the English flag, and he was anxious to try it; there would be no ice-floes there. He said nothing of Hudson's Strait to his new masters.

[1] No. 65, Sebastian Cabot in 1512.

[2] No. 66, King Ferdinand to Sebastian Cabot.

CHAPTER X

SEBASTIAN CABOT AND THE PROJECTS OF 1517 AND 1521

SEBASTIAN CABOT entered the Spanish service as a naval captain (not yet as Pilot-Major) in the autumn of 1512. It is evident that the English government viewed the transference without ill-will, for shortly afterwards Cabot returned to England to fetch his family and apparently suffered no molestation. In fact it is probable that Henry VIII's officials were at that time indifferent, for with the outbreak of the wars transatlantic discovery had gone out of fashion. King Ferdinand's intention was to send the explorer on a quest for a western strait in Caribbean latitudes, and the date fixed was 1516, by which time European peace had been restored. But Ferdinand died in January of that year, and the project was postponed. It was not revived because the colonists of Cuba began on their own account an effective exploration which led to the conquest of Mexico. There are dim suggestions of another English visit by Sebastian Cabot in 1516: in May of that year an English testator left a legacy to his daughter, and there are contemporary mentions of his name in certain rolls of the City of London.[1]

The interest of these circumstances lies in the fact that in 1517 an English transatlantic voyage was attempted, and we have a statement that Sebastian was concerned in its direction. This vague form of predication is adopted of necessity. The statement is from the pen of Richard Eden, who knew Sebastian Cabot during the post-1548 period of his career. In 1553 Eden published *A Treatise of the New India*, a translation of a German work, with a preface addressed to the Duke of Northumberland. The preface says[2] that about 1516–17 Henry VIII sent out certain ships "under the governance of" Sebastian Cabot and "one Sir Thomas Perte" (actually Thomas Spert) and that it was Spert's faintheartedness that caused the voyage to take no effect. Apart from this statement, made long after the event, there is no evidence that Sebastian or Spert accompanied this voyage, and there is fairly good evidence that they did not. Consequently it has, until recently, been strongly doubted that there was any voyage at all. The doubt was removed by the publication in 1923

[1] Harrisse, *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1896), p. 161, and A. W. Reed, in *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. IX, p. 138. On the other hand the visit, if it took place, was very brief, for Spanish documents show Cabot's presence at Seville on several dates in 1516–17—See Medina's *Sebastián Caboto al servicio de España*, I, pp. 23–4.

[2] No. 67, Eden's note on the voyage of 1517.

of some documents discovered by Professor A. W. Reed in the records of the Court of Requests.[1] They give the story of a dispute that arose out of this unfortunate venture, which really did take place in 1517, and they lend new significance to a state paper that had long been available but had not appeared to have any bearing on the subject.

We may consider the state paper first. It is a patent containing letters of recommendation from Henry VIII to all Christian princes on behalf of John Rastell, Richard Spicer and William Howting, citizens of London.[2] These men are described as intending to journey to distant parts of the world "for the accomplishing of certain business of ours and theirs", and all friendly powers are conjured, with an immensity of detail, to afford them favour and protection. The document was sealed on March 5, 1517. By itself it appears unimportant, for it reads merely as if it were a passport for trade through Christendom. But the newly discovered records show that Rastell, Spicer and Howting were purposing to cross the Atlantic and that it was to that project that the grant referred. The words above quoted indicate that the Crown had some share in the venture.

What followed may be gathered, in partial outline, from the proceedings in the Court of Requests. John Rastell, a lawyer, author, and brother-in-law of Sir Thomas More, in partnership with Spicer and Howting, made preparations for a voyage to the New Found Land. Its purposes can be inferred only from sidewinds. Fishing was certainly one of them, but colonization was also intended, to judge from a reference to "tools for masons and carpenters, and other engines that he [Rastell] had prepared for the New Lands". Other goods mentioned in the lawsuit look as if they were stores for colonists rather than for fishermen on a temporary visit. Several ships were employed, although we have the names of only two, the *Barbara* and the *Mary Barking*; the others are attested by references to "the fleet" and "the other ships". It is almost certain that one or more of them belonged to the Navy, for the Earl of Surrey, then Lord Admiral, was endued with some kind of control over the expedition. One of Surrey's satellites, John Ravyn, appears as the villain of the story. He was purser of the *Barbara* and, according to Rastell, overthrew the project by instigating the shipmasters to allege leaks and deficiencies and so to delay departure until the summer season was too far gone for success. Moreover, Ravyn was further accused of stealing and selling the venturers'

[1] *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. IX, pp. 137–47. The Bill of Complaint and Answer are reprinted here as No. 69, but the depositions of witnesses have been omitted owing to their great length.

[2] No. 68, Letters of Recommendation, 1517.

cargo, and behind him, acting in some obscure way as a malign influence, can be discerned the Lord Admiral. Why he was an ill-wisher is not apparent, but the fact is plain, and it is to be noted that Rastell did not seek redress in the Admiralty Court, which would have been the natural tribunal to try such a cause.

The fleet sailed from Gravesend, and was delayed first by Ravyn's contrivance at Sandwich. It then put in at Dartmouth, Plymouth and Falmouth, to repair leaks and purchase stores. Even then the sailors showed no heart for the business. Ravyn and the masters counselled abandonment and a trading voyage to Bordeaux instead. Rastell and his partners persisted in their first intention and got the ships to sea. It was of no avail, for their incorrigible mariners next made for Waterford and Cork, and that was as far west as they would go. At Cork they stopped argument by locking William Howting in his cabin and sailing straight back to England; and Rastell and his servants were also overcome by threats of violence. Rastell appears to have remained in Ireland for the two following years.

That is the substance of the rambling story told in the Court of Requests two years afterwards. It is amplified by a number of references in a play written by Rastell at the same time. The *New Interlude* devotes considerable space to a description of America and advocation of colonial undertakings. I have copied all the relevant lines,[1] and they are of interest, not only for this voyage, but as an account of the experience gained by English pioneers in general. The facts may be taken as those gathered by the Bristol men of 1497–1509, and by the fishermen who were regularly sailing to the Newfoundland banks. The stress laid upon the nearness of Asia to the new lands is noteworthy: "But these new lands, by all cosmography, from the Khan of Cathay's land cannot lie little past a thousand miles".

Neither in the Court of Requests nor in the *New Interlude* is there any mention of Sebastian Cabot or Thomas Spert. Apart from Spanish evidence it is fairly certain that Cabot did not accompany the expedition, for he would hardly have gone in any capacity but that of commander-in-chief, a position that Rastell seems to have occupied. Moreover, the letters of recommendation would certainly have named Cabot if he had taken part. Thomas Spert is proved to have been in or about London on April 28, July 10 and September 17 of this year 1517, which renders it improbable that he participated in person.[2] My former impression was that these

[1] No. 70, The earliest English description of America.

[2] Documents quoted in *Maritime Enterprise, 1485–1558*, pp. 243–4.

The Waldseemüller Inset Map

By kind permission of Messrs. Henry Stevens, Son & Stiles

circumstances showed that neither Cabot nor Spert had anything to do with the voyage. The new evidence has made me alter that opinion, and I believe that we are not bound to reject Richard Eden's story but only to read it more closely. Eden does not say that Cabot and Spert personally sailed; what he does say is that the ships were under their governance. A contemporary business of 1553 (the date of his writing) was running in his mind and may have formed his phraseology. For in that year the Willoughby expedition sailed to the North East, and Sebastian Cabot was Governor of the company that sent it out. In that sense Willoughby's ships were under Cabot's governance. The same arrangement may have prevailed in 1517. We may regard Sebastian Cabot as organizer and general director of the project. Perhaps, as a Spanish official, he did not venture to appear too prominently; perhaps he meant to accompany a later fleet if the thing promised well. A double game was rather characteristic of him: if the English venture succeeded, he would leave the Spanish service, but meanwhile he would not commit himself too deeply. A brief stay in England would have sufficed for consultation; or it may have been effected through the medium of Englishmen at Seville. The king and the Lord Admiral were concerned in the matter, and Thomas Spert, as a senior master in the Navy, may have acted for the Admiral. Surrey's influence was hostile, for reasons not known; at least he sheltered the delinquents. Hence the denunciation of Spert. In this manner all the evidence may be made to fit together. But it is largely conjectural. Apart from Eden's bare allusion there is still no proof that Sebastian Cabot had anything to do with the affair.

Some general considerations may be stated. There would have been no need to procure a safe-conduct under the Great Seal or to call upon the naval authorities for help in a mere fishing expedition. Neither would a man of Rastell's pursuits have been likely to engage in such a venture. There was evidently more in it than that. The indications of a colonial plan have been noted. A colony might have supported and been supported by a fishery. But Rastell's mind, as revealed in the *New Interlude*, was running on Cathay; and we know that Sebastian Cabot, if he was concerned, had the same interest. In Elizabethan times Frobisher and the Gilberts combined the project of the Asiatic passage with one of a North American settlement to act as a half-way post. It may well be that this was the plan of 1517—a colony in Newfoundland to serve as a fishing-base and as a base from which to penetrate the North West, and at the same time to stake a claim to a monopoly of both interests. It is a link in the chain from John Cabot, through the patents of 1501 and 1502,

to Sir Humphrey Gilbert. We discern it uncertainly—but at least the *New Interlude* places Cathay not far beyond the New Found Land.

Whatever may have been the truth in 1517, there is clear evidence that in 1520–1 Sebastian Cabot was in England negotiating with the Crown for the conduct of an expedition to Asia by the North West Passage. Our first testimony is contained in a letter written to the Council of Ten by Gaspar Contarini, Venetian ambassador in Spain, on December 31, 1522.[1] There Cabot is reported as saying that "about three years ago" Cardinal Wolsey had offered him high terms if he would take command of a fleet. The time indicated agrees approximately with some date in 1520, when we may judge by other evidence that the project originated. Its nature appears from the conversation of Sebastian Cabot, as further reported by Contarini, for Sebastian said, "I had the means of rendering Venice a partner in this navigation, and of showing her a passage whereby she would obtain great profit; which is the truth, for I have discovered it;" and additional allusions describe a proposed trade in spices and gold with Asiatic countries.

There is the project outlined. It has been read by some commentators as a mere piece of bluff and mystification on the part of Sebastian Cabot, on the *a priori* assumption that he was an outrageous liar who never had made any discoveries in person. But it appears on reflection that the concept lacks consistency. Sebastian, on the admission of his detractors, was a clever, subtle-minded man. That being so, why should he risk his newly-won position of Pilot-Major of Spain[2] by coquetting with England about a plan in which he could have had no genuine belief? How would it have profited him, if his bluff had been called and he had sailed on this voyage, to have returned empty-handed after wasting his new employers' money? He would have had no future in England, and very likely none in Spain. No, Sebastian was clever, and he was certainly no more scrupulous than the average cosmopolitan careerist. But this business is not explicable save on the ground that he genuinely believed that he knew the passage to Asia and was prepared to stake his all upon it. In the previous chapter I have indicated what I think he had really done in 1509: he had passed through Hudson's Strait and seen Hudson's Bay, which he took to be the Pacific. That is what he meant a dozen years later when he said, "I have discovered it".

To reap the harvest of that discovery became the ambition of his life. England after 1509 offered him no hope; the young and warlike

[1] No. 71, Sebastian Cabot's negotiations with Venice.

[2] He was appointed in February, 1518.

Henry VIII had at first no interest in such things. Sebastian Cabot went to Spain, and there he found, in 1512–15, that the theory of a passage westward from the Caribbean was in favour. He accepted the prospective command, but the death of Ferdinand postponed the venture, and the revelation of Mexico by Hernandez de Córdova and Juan de Grijalva in 1517–18 threw the business into the hands of the Cuban Spaniards. Whilst waiting for the Caribbean command, Sebastian had prudently said nothing of his northern strait; and it was quite natural that he should push only one project at a time. But when after all the Caribbean failed him he could hardly announce his vital discovery. The Seville authorities would have been suspicious and would have asked why he had not been frank with them from the outset. Moreover he knew Spanish seamanship and he knew the Arctic ice, and it is likely that he could foresee no useful outcome from introducing the one to the other. He was therefore driven to intriguing more or less covertly with other powers for the means of fulfilling his dream.

He must have been quite outspoken with the English government. Wolsey's name is sufficient guarantee of that. For in 1509 Wolsey had already been a man of mark, acquainted with great affairs, and he knew, without a doubt, what had resulted from the voyage of that year. Wolsey and the king were now eager for the opening of this spice route, and they determined that the merchants of England should subscribe the capital for a great expedition with the discoverer of the Passage at its head. The magnitude of the scheme shows how fully they trusted him. And indeed, the judgment of contemporaries is quite at variance with that of Sebastian Cabot's modern biographers. The English, then and to his death, thought him a most valuable man. So also did the Spaniards. Ferdinand went out of his way to recruit him into the Spanish service. Charles V made him Pilot-Major, the highest post in the mercantile marine. Contarini wrote of him from the Spanish court, "This man is in great repute here". His repute was high enough to survive more than one incident such as would have clouded the prospects of an ordinary individual. It is hardly conceivable that so many good judges of ability could have been taken in by a charlatan.

Of the English project and its failure we hear more from an English source. Merchant companies throughout the kingdom were approached by the government. The records of one only, the Drapers' Company of London, have preserved any account of the matter.[1] On March 1, 1521, the wardens of the Drapers, with the Lord Mayor presiding, met those

[1] No. 72, Plans for the expedition of 1521.

of certain other companies to devise an answer to the king's proposals. The date indicates that the business had originated in 1520. The royal plans are not explicitly on record, but their tenor can be deduced from the Drapers' replies on March 1 and 11, the latter after further consultation with the Mercers. The king offered a ship of the Royal Navy and required that the London Companies should provide five other ships among them, of a burden not exceeding 120 tons each and victualled for a year. Other ports were to participate, and Bristol had already promised two ships. The king was prepared to furnish all tackle and ordnance and bear "the adventure", that is, the risk of loss, of the vessels. The national corporation so formed was to have a ten years' monopoly and respite from customs for two years and six months, and the City of London should be its "head rulers for all the whole realm". The destination of the expedition is named as the New Found Land, but it was so only in the first instance, and the implication of the replies shows that a much more distant objective was in contemplation—undoubtedly Asia, by the North American passage.

The London Companies were not enthusiastic. They objected to the scheme in principle and in detail. In principle they said that if it succeeded they feared reprisals on their trade in Spain and other countries (presumably Portugal is included); these old and valued trades would be attacked by restrictive navigation acts. That alone is an indication that something more than a Newfoundland venture was intended, for English fishing-fleets were already going to that coast. In detail they urged that the objective was "farther hence than few English mariners can tell", and that no information could be obtained about the navigation and its perils from native-born sailors of the realm. Again, this would be beside the point in speaking merely of the Newfoundland voyage. Next, they urged that it was "too sore adventure" to risk five ships and cargoes "unto the said Island upon the singular trust of one man, called, as we understand, Sebastian, which Sebastian, as we hear say, was never in that land himself, all if he makes report of many things as he hath heard his father and other men speak in times past".

There is the crucial passage, the most damning of all that exist to the claims of Sebastian Cabot as an explorer. The London merchants denied that Sebastian had ever been in "that land". They remembered John Cabot's triumphant return in 1497 and his inglorious homecoming in 1498 or 1499. They had reason for saying that Sebastian had not shared in those adventures, for, as I have shown, he was probably too young to have taken part. But what of the voyage of 1509? On a literal reading

of their pronouncement, they ignored it. They may quite honestly have done so. Its return had almost certainly been to Bristol, and its failure to open a rich trade had quite possibly been overlooked in a London which had not invested in it. But I suggest an alternative explanation. The Drapers, whilst speaking of Newfoundland, were thinking of Cathay and Cipango. Their composition is muddled in thought and defective in syntax, as one can but admit on reading it. And if they really meant that Sebastian had not been to Asia they were on safe ground that the king could not gainsay. I do not hold that interpretation as established, but merely suggest that the whole context gives it some support. Falling back upon the safer and more literal reading we have an implied denial by the Londoners of the discovery of 1509 or of any other discovery by Sebastian Cabot. It is the strongest card in the hands of his opponents. They should not underestimate one that is even stronger, that the astute Wolsey believed in him and was prepared to stake a national venture on his leadership. The London merchants were unbelievers who certainly had no desire to believe. It is possible that Wolsey was better informed than they.

They went on to voice a further objection, that even if Sebastian had been in those parts and were as cunning and competent as a man might be, he could still sail only in one ship, and the others if they parted company would be lost for lack of pilotage, "having none other assistance of masters and mariners of England exercised and laboured in the same parts". Once more one must urge, how can this apply to Newfoundland, seeing that in the following year a state paper refers to the Newfoundland fishing-fleet as a regular institution?[1] Coupling all this with what Cabot told Contarini, how can one doubt that the "parts" really in question were those of Cathay, and that by consequence the Drapers' denial was not of Sebastian's passage leading thereto, but only of his having followed it to its end? If the worthy Drapers were actually denying that any Englishman knew the way to Newfoundland they were palpably misinformed, and their testimony against Sebastian is worth little.

However, this question, important as it is to our conception of Sebastian Cabot, is a side-issue to the project of 1521, which we have now to follow to its conclusion. The London Companies raised as many obstacles as they could. They sent commissioners to Wolsey to offer the equipment of two or three ships, but desired a longer respite to discuss the matter. The Cardinal replied that His Majesty required the full plan to take effect. At the same time the Lord Mayor was called into Henry's presence, and

[1] *Letters and Papers*, Vol. III, pt. ii, Nos. 2458–9.

"His Grace would have no nay therein, but spake sharply to the Mayor to see it put in execution to the best of his power". Thereupon the unwilling Mayor summoned a meeting of his fraternity in the Drapers' Hall, and with the exercise of "great labour and diligence and many divers warnings" collected a few niggardly subscriptions, which amounted first and last to 200 marks or £133. 6*s*. 8*d*. How much the other Companies promised we do not know, but the scheme fell flat. Wolsey and the king had sufficient driving power to compel acquiescence if they had remained in the mind for it. But the international situation was changing, and this year witnessed the outbreak of the second French war of the reign.[1] The fleet was mobilized, and it became out of the question to think of sending away good ships and hundreds of mariners. That must be regarded as the chief reason for the abandonment of the project.

Henry's personal attitude is interesting. In 1509–12 he had been indifferent to discovery. Ten years later he set his heart on it. Dr Reed suggests that the new influence was that of Sir Thomas More. More had finished the *Utopia* in 1516. Rastell was his kinsman and had tried in 1517 to turn fancy into fact. Although the king had given his countenance the king's Lord Admiral had been hostile, a fact which shows the royal approval to have been but languid. Then in 1519 occurred changes at court. Wolsey was afraid that his young sovereign was falling into bad company, and a number of *roués* were suddenly given appointments overseas. Into their places came More and his sober-minded friends, and learning grew fashionable.[2] Henry studied theology, condemned Luther, and became Defender of the Faith. He also studied cosmography and evolved the project of 1521. From the beginning he had loved ships and seamen, and now he had found an employment worthy of them. Events thwarted the new ambition but never entirely killed it, and to the end of his life the king hankered after the voyage to Cathay. He was more progressive than his London citizens.

Sebastian Cabot gave a somewhat different explanation of the failure in the course of his conversations with the Venetian ambassador in Spain. He said that the ships were nearly ready for the voyage and that 30,000 ducats (about £8000) had been collected. He himself had promised Wolsey to take the command provided leave were given him by Spain. At that juncture a Venetian friar in London reproached him for doing

[1] Not actually declared until 1522, but determined upon in the summer of 1521.

[2] See A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama*, London, 1926, especially pp. 47–8, and A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII* (1919 edition), p. 129.

so much for foreigners and neglecting his native city. Sebastian was struck by sudden remorse and determined to withdraw from the English enterprise and offer the plan to Venice. He wrote to the Emperor advising him to refuse the necessary leave, and was forthwith recalled to Seville. After that he opened negotiations with Venice by a messenger pledged to secrecy. Thus Sebastian Cabot; and we are no more obliged to believe his gloss upon the story than was Gasparo Contarini to whom he spoke. This kind of thing was characteristic of the diplomatic intercourse of the time, and since it deceived no one it was not a very heinous kind of falsehood. Contarini quite understood that, the English plan having failed, Sebastian was seeking another market for his wares.

We may infer that the Spanish authorities had given their Pilot-Major a *mauvais quart d'heure* on his return to duty, for he was in deadly fear lest his Venetian proposal should leak out. He lost countenance on seeing that Contarini was privy to it, for he had counted on the reply from Venice arriving by the same subterranean channel as he had himself employed. He implored Contarini to be discreet: "I most earnestly beseech you to keep the thing secret, as it would cost me my life". He refused to enter into details in Spain. He would go in person to Venice and unfold his scheme only to the Chiefs of the Ten, and he would tell the Spaniards that the journey was necessary in order that he should recover his mother's dowry. Contarini was mystified. Cabot had some important idea, but he could not guess what it was. The ambassador was evidently no student of exploration and did not think of the North West Passage. All he gathered was that it was a scheme for trade with Asia, and he supposed it must be by way of the Indian Ocean, to which he saw fatal objections. One of them was that Venetian fleets could never pass Gibraltar without the consent of Spain. This applied equally to the northern passage, but Cabot was sure it could be overcome. What was in his mind we cannot certainly tell, but a reading of the whole evidence suggests a solution. It was that the ships should sail after all from England and that Venice should finance the enterprise through her mercantile colony in London. We know that finance was the obstacle to the purely English project, and Sebastian may well have hit upon the device of combining Venetian capital with English shipping. Nothing came of it. The Signory was to a certain extent impressed by the preliminaries, but Cabot did not go to Venice. Important business was impending in Spain and the time was not propitious for asking leave of absence. After the summer of 1523 the negotiations were dropped.

Once more we are struck by Sebastian's own confidence in his discovery. He may have exaggerated in saying that exposure would imperil his life, but it is quite credible that it would have lost him his high appointment. After a second flirtation with a foreign power the Emperor would have dispensed with his services and would very likely have imprisoned him to stop his mouth. And yet Sebastian risked it. He had no nice sense of honour, but he dared much and believed in his star.

CHAPTER XI

THE VOYAGE OF 1527 AND THE WRITINGS OF ROBERT THORNE

FOR many years after the fiasco of 1521 we have no evidence of any communication between the English government and Sebastian Cabot, and the general inference from his record is that when Venice declined to adopt his scheme he devoted himself to the Spanish service.

Henry VIII, on the other hand, still thought of promoting the Arctic discovery, although by utilizing other commanders for that purpose. The Genoese had considered a plan for opening up a trade between Asia and Western Europe by way of Russia. It was a variant of their ancient trade-route through the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, now cut by the Turks, and it was actually operated for a few years in the late sixteenth century by the English Muscovy Company, whose factors went down the Volga and across the Caspian to Persia. About 1525 a Genoese named Paulo Centurione, who had been in Russia, came to London to place before Henry VIII the project of "conducting the spices and other merchandise of Calicut and Tauris into our parts of Europe by way of Muscovy".[1] Russia at that date extended neither to the Baltic nor to the Black Sea, and it was therefore impossible for English ships to gain access to her by any known navigation. The Hanseatic League held the Baltic ports and controlled the trade inland from them to the Czar's dominions, and the League's policy was so monopolistic that it would not have allowed English merchants to use that route. The plan therefore involved the discovery of a new way to Russia by the unknown coasts beyond the northern extremity of Scandinavia. This may be indicated by the statement that Henry promised Centurione certain ships to go and discover new countries. Perhaps, if the northern seas proved navigable, it was intended to open the complete North East Passage to the Pacific, and so avoid traversing Russia at all. Alas, it remained but an intention, for "the good and industrious Paulo fell sick in London, and went to make discoveries in the next world".

Two years afterwards Henry achieved his design so far as to get an expedition to sea. The objective this time was the North West Passage,

[1] No. 73, A projected spice trade. This Genoese authority, the only one for this transaction, gives the whole story under the date 1525. But since the series of events obviously covered several years, we are left in doubt whether 1525 was the exact date of Henry VIII's interest in the affair.

whose discovery, as the English undoubtedly knew, had been claimed by Sebastian Cabot. Sebastian, however, was not available as the commander. In 1527 he was far away south of the equator, penetrating the River Plate and its affluents in the service of Charles V. The English expedition was under English leadership, except that it had an Italian pilot to advise the captains.

Two ships were employed, the *Mary of Gilford* of 160 tons, built in 1524, and belonging to the Royal Navy, and the *Samson*, of unknown but possibly greater burden, which appears to have been a merchantman.[1] Mr Oppenheim gives the former vessel's name as the *Mary Guildford* and suggests that it was bestowed as a compliment to Sir Henry Guldeford, comptroller of the royal household, whose wife was named Mary. It may be so, but the ship's captain, in his letter to the king, calls her the *Mary of Gilford*, which looks like a reference to her place of origin. That was certainly not the county town of Surrey, but more probably Guldeford, near Rye in Sussex, a creek in which large ships were built in the early Tudor period. It is now an inland site, some miles from salt water, but the local pronunciation of the name is still "Gilford".

Grafton's Chronicle,[2] which omits the names, says that the two ships sailed from the Thames "to seek strange regions", on May 20, 1527. This authority tells nothing about the fortunes of the voyage or the date of its return. Hakluyt made enquiries and elicited a vague story from Sir Martin Frobisher and one Richard Allen, who is otherwise unknown. According to this account[3] one of the leaders of the enterprise was an unnamed canon of St Paul's, a great mathematician, who went in person on the voyage. Hakluyt's informants told him that one of the ships was named the *Dominus Vobiscum*, which was incorrect, and that they sailed into the great opening between "the north parts of Newfoundland" (Labrador) and "the country lately called by Her Majesty, Meta Incognita" (Baffin Land). This indicates that the opening was Hudson's Strait or Frobisher's Sound. Here one of the vessels was lost, and the other turned back to Cape Breton and Arambec (Nova Scotia). After examining those coasts she sailed home to England and arrived in October, 1527.

Much of this is questionable, as we shall see by better evidence. The nature of Richard Allen's information is quite unknown, but that of Frobisher's may be surmised. Frobisher was by no means a bookish

[1] M. Oppenheim, *Hist. of the Administration of the Royal Navy*, London, 1896, p. 50, gives the details about the *Mary of Gilford*, but his Navy Lists do not contain the *Samson*.

[2] No. 74. [3] No. 75.

man, and it is unlikely that he had made any documentary researches. But he first went to sea in 1553, twenty-six years after the date of the voyage, and it is possible that he had met some veteran who had told him the yarn from personal experience. If that was so the inaccuracies are explicable, for such stories are always garbled by repetition and the lapse of time.

Although Hakluyt did not know it, there were two letters in existence written by members of the expedition. They came into the possession of Samuel Purchas, who printed a fragment of one and the whole of the other in 1625.[1] The last-mentioned was written by John Rut, master of the *Mary of Gilford*, on August 3, 1527, from the harbour of St John's in Newfoundland. It informed the king that the two ships had left Plymouth on June 10 and had sailed together until the night of July 1st when Rut in the *Mary* parted company with the *Samson* in a storm. Rut continued northwards for two days more, until he encountered much floating ice in latitude 53° N. Up to this point he had seen no land, and was in deep water giving no soundings. The quantity of the ice convinced him that it was dangerous to go on, and he turned southward. Four days later he had soundings, and after that sighted land (evidently southern Labrador) in 52°. He entered a harbour which he calls Cape de Bas, and which Dr Biggar suggests may be St Lewis Inlet in 52° 20′.[2] There he remained ten days watering and fishing and then sailed southwards to St John's, where he proposed to wait for the *Samson* to rejoin. The rendezvous actually agreed upon was Cape de Sper (Cape Spear) three miles from St John's. Rut evidently despatched his letter by one of the numerous fishing craft which he found at St John's—Normans, Bretons and Portuguese, but no English—for he did not himself purpose an immediate return. He said he would replenish his victuals by fishing and then push on again "to that Islands that we are commanded, by the grace of God, as we were commanded at our departing". This may mean Cipango and the Spice Islands, to be attained by the North West Passage.

The letter was written and signed by John Rut "in bad English and worse writing", and Purchas adds that over it was a superscription to the effect that "Master Grube's two ships" left Plymouth on June 10 and reached Cape de Bas on July 21. It has been surmised that Master Grube was the captain of the *Samson*, whose name is not elsewhere recorded. In view of the bad writing Purchas complained of

[1] No. 76.

[2] H. P. Biggar, *An English Expedition to America in 1527*, in *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à M. Charles Bémont*, Paris, 1913, pp. 459–72.

it seems more probable that "Grube" is merely a perversion of "Jo. rutte".

The other letter which Purchas had in his possession was addressed to Cardinal Wolsey from the same place, St John's, but dated August 10. It was written in Latin and signed "Albertus de Prato". Purchas, who lacked the historical acumen of Hakluyt, printed in full the elaborate address and subscription and omitted the body of the letter, because its substance, he says, was the same as in Rut's. Hakluyt would certainly have reversed the procedure and printed the informative portion whilst omitting the merely diplomatic framework. This Albertus de Prato was very likely the canon of St Paul's referred to in Frobisher's tale, and may be the Piedmontese pilot whom we shall find mentioned in a Spanish document to be considered below. The fact that these letters were in the hands of Purchas in 1625 raises an interesting question. One, and probably both, had belonged to Cardinal Wolsey. In the course of his career the Cardinal must have accumulated a large collection of state papers, but no one seems to know what became of them at his death. There is no Wolsey collection comparable to the Cecil papers at Hatfield House and in the Lansdowne MSS. If such a deposit existed we should probably know a good deal more about the relations of Sebastian Cabot with the English government.

The above represents the story of the 1527 voyage as it was known in England at the time and for a century afterwards. It may be possible to elucidate some obscure points. The fact that the destination was Asia is only slightly indicated by Rut's phrasing, but will be placed beyond doubt by the Spanish evidence yet to be dealt with. The course followed from England took the expedition into the seas between Greenland and Labrador. Rut attained his maximum latitude on July 3 before sighting any land. It might be argued that he was making northwards, to the east of Greenland, but this is negatived by the fact that the appointed rendezvous in case of separation was in Newfoundland. If he had been going east of Greenland the rendezvous would certainly have been fixed upon the well-known Iceland coast. There is therefore little doubt that Rut was steering towards the entrance of Davis Strait. The passage from Plymouth to this north-western point in twenty-three days was remarkably quick but not quite unprecedented. As Purchas prints the letter it gives the highest north as 53 degrees. I suppose we must accept it, but Purchas was notoriously careless and the writing was bad. It is to be noted that after turning back, the *Mary of Gilford* took four days (or more) to make one degree of latitude southwards. If we identify Cape de Bas with St

Lewis Inlet, the time was eighteen days. One is tempted to surmise that Rut actually gave 63° as his farthest north.[1] This, allowing for a slight error, would agree with Frobisher's version that the expedition drew near to Hudson's Strait or Frobisher's Sound. Rut and his ship survived the voyage and are found in the autumn of 1528 making a trip from England to Bordeaux for wines.[2] It was believed that the *Samson* foundered in the storm of July 1st. Rut was anxious about her—"I trust in Almighty Jesu to hear good news of her"—and she was never reported again in England. But another possibility is opened up by a remarkable Spanish story that the English never heard.

That story is embodied in the three testimonies printed in this volume as Nos. 77–79. Two are state papers which remained unknown in the Seville archives until recent years. The third is an extract from the Spanish historian Oviedo, whose book was printed in 1535 but escaped even the searching eye of Richard Hakluyt. Another Spanish writer, Herrera, also mentions the affair, but his account is merely an inaccurate summary of document No. 78, and is therefore not reproduced here.

On November 19, 1527, a Spanish shipmaster was loading his caravel with cassava at the little island of Mona, which lies just within the Caribbean Sea at the southern end of the channel between Porto Rico and Hispaniola. A large vessel drew near, and her captain and thirty armed men came off in their pinnace to interview the Spaniard. He noticed that they carried longbows and crossbows and two pieces of artillery mounted in the pinnace. As for their ship, she had three tops and seemed to be of 250 tons; but since the Spanish ton was smaller than the English, we may reduce this estimate to something under 200, and it is not greatly at variance with the 160 attributed to the *Mary of Gilford*. The Spaniard asked the strangers who they were. They said they were Englishmen and Londoners and their ship the king's. They had set out with a consort to discover the land of the Great Khan, but had parted company in a storm. They had reached a frozen sea and had been stopped by the ice. They had next entered a sea where the water was boiling and threatened to melt their pitch—which must be either leg-pulling or a misinterpretation of the broken Spanish employed—and they had then made for Newfoundland and encountered the fishing-fleets. They had sailed southwards, and at one place where they landed the Indians had killed their pilot, a Piedmontese. After coasting for more than four hundred leagues they had

[1] See also below, p. 260, where Spanish evidence gives the latitude attained by one of the ships as 64°.

[2] Biggar, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

crossed over to the Antilles to explore the island of San Juan (Porto Rico). They wished to make a report on the islands for the King of England and to take back a cargo of Brazil-wood. They inquired the course for Santo Domingo and asked who was in charge of that town.

The Spaniard answered their questions and was invited on board. The ship was well armed, carried seventy men, and was laden with cloth, linen and provisions. There were carpenters, smiths and other craftsmen, and a forge, an oven, and shipbuilding tools. The captain asked the Spaniard if he could read Latin or Spanish, as he wished to show him the king's instructions, but the Spaniard was illiterate and did not see them. The English stayed two days at Mona and then, with a salute of guns and trumpets, sailed off for Santo Domingo.

On November 25 they arrived off that port, and their captain went in with a boat's crew. They told the same story, with variations of detail. They had been looking for a strait between Greenland and Newfoundland, by which to pass to Tartary; and one witness said they claimed to have reached the latitude of 64° N. They had lost some men from cold, and the pilot had been killed, and they now desired not only to trade but to enlist a pilot to guide them back to England. To this last the Spaniards very pertinently replied that if they had lost their way home they could have found it more easily from the North West than by coming to the Caribbean to look for it.

The arrival of this, the pioneer English vessel in the West Indies, caused perturbation in Santo Domingo. The officials had cause for alarm. The French had begun to harry the Indies some five years before, and here it seemed was the precursor of a new swarm of corsairs. They determined to lure the ship into the harbour and there deal with her, and for that purpose sent out the high sheriff and a couple of pilots. By that time the day was advanced and the pilots decided that *mañana* would do. Next morning they brought her to the mouth of the river and anchored to wait for a change of wind. All were sitting at breakfast in the cabin when the fortress fired a gun, and the shot narrowly missed the poop and the breakfast-party. The English captain may already have had his misgivings. He turned colour and accused the Spaniards of treachery. In vain they assured him that it was but a welcoming salute. One did not fire salutes with ball, and he tumbled his guests into their boat, raised anchor, and made sail out of range. The commander of the fortress had acted prematurely and afterwards got into hot water for it.

Three or four days later the ship touched at Ocoa, a small place eighteen leagues along the coast. An armed party landed and asked if they could

buy provisions. On being refused, they took all they could find—some cassava, fish, chickens, and hundreds of eggs—and stripped the few inhabitants of their clothing. They uttered loud threats against the city of Santo Domingo, saying that they would come again with a fleet and make the dogs pay for their surly conduct; and one Englishman tapped his forehead and said, "By my head, they shall pay for it!" And that was all. They never came again, and Oviedo says it was supposed that this ship was lost with all hands on her voyage to Europe.

There remains a problem which has not been cleared up. Was it the *Samson* or the *Mary of Gilford* that came to Santo Domingo? Against the *Samson* it may be argued that she was thought by the English to have been lost in the North West. Against the *Mary* we have the certainty that she came home, and yet that there was no knowledge of the Caribbean adventure on record in Hakluyt's time. Moreover, if Frobisher was correct in saying that the surviving ship reached England in October, that ship was Rut's and he could not have been in the West Indies in November. It may be that Frobisher was wrong, that John Rut was the Englishman at Santo Domingo, and that the affair was hushed up for reasons of state. Albert de Prato was certainly with him, and a Piedmontese had been in the Santo Domingo ship. If the ships were not identical it follows that either vessel had an Italian among its officers. Again, there is that phrase in Rut's Newfoundland letter about going on "to that Islands that we were commanded...at our departing". The islands may have been the West Indies; the English captain there had certainly some written instructions to show which he thought would justify his appearance.[1] On the other hand, we have the Spaniards' belief that the Santo Domingo ship never reached port, in which case she must have been the *Samson*. On the whole the *Samson* has it, although the doubt is considerable.[2] Her loss would account for the adventure not being followed up. Perhaps it was, by private individuals, although not by the Crown; but we do not hear certainly of Englishmen sailing to the West Indies until 1540, when a few pirates made their way thither in the track of the French.

Whilst the 1527 voyage was being planned and accomplished, Robert

[1] For Henry VIII to send a ship to the West Indies would have been an act offensive to Spain; and it is noteworthy that the spring of 1527 witnessed a change in English foreign policy. Wolsey, hitherto the ally of Charles V, persuaded Henry to turn against him and enter into alliance with Francis I.

[2] The question was discussed by Mr F. A. Kirkpatrick in the *English Historical Review*, Vol. xx, pp. 115–24, "The First Recorded English Voyage to the West Indies". His opinion was that the ship was the *Samson*.

Thorne, a Bristol merchant residing at Seville, was revolving a different project for discovering the Asiatic passage by the north. He was the son of the Robert Thorne of the 1502 Company of Adventurers. His ideas have generally been considered as the inspiration of Rut's voyage, but there are reasons which seem to render that view inadmissible. I have therefore postponed the consideration of Thorne until after that of Rut, which appears to be the correct logical if not chronological sequence.

The Thorne writings consist of two memorials, one addressed to Henry VIII, and the other to Edward Lee, the English ambassador in Spain; and the latter was evidently written in response to inquiries by the ambassador about oceanic enterprises. Copies kept by Thorne passed from him to his friend Emanuel Lucar, and were lent some fifty years afterwards by Emanuel's son Cyprian to John Dee, the Elizabethan man of science. Dee in his turn had the copies made which are now preserved with other papers of his in the British Museum. Cyprian Lucar also showed the manuscripts to Richard Hakluyt, who printed them in 1582, 1589 and 1598, on each occasion with new variations of detail. The nearest extant version to Thorne's original is thus the Elizabethan manuscript copy, incomplete and mutilated, in Cotton MSS, Vitellius C vii, ff. 329–45. Hakluyt improved upon this text even in his first printed edition of 1582.[1]

The occasion of Thorne's activity was the new development promised in the spice trade by Magellan's discovery of the South West Passage through his straits to the Pacific in 1519–22. The few survivors of Magellan's expedition came home in the latter year with news that they had attained the Spice Islands by a westward navigation. The enterprise which had inspired Columbus and John Cabot was at length accomplished. A dispute about the longitude of the Spice Islands at once broke out between Spain and Portugal, since both powers claimed the region as within the hemisphere of their monopoly. Other Spanish expeditions were organized to follow up the discovery. One of these was sanctioned in 1524 and sailed in April, 1526, under the command of Sebastian Cabot, Pilot-Major of Spain. His ostensible purpose, which he did not fulfil, was to traverse the straits and discover Ophir and Tarsis and Eastern Cathay, as well as new spice regions believed to exist in the equatorial or southern Pacific and undoubtedly within the Spanish hemisphere. It was a belief which survived in one form or another until the days of Captain Cook. With Sebastian Cabot sailed Roger Barlow and Henry Latimer, Englishmen of some education in cosmography, who were introduced into the expedi-

[1] See above, pp. 150–2.

tion, together with an investment of 1400 ducats, by Robert Thorne. His aim was to obtain a first-hand account of the prospective discoveries.

Thorne, whilst anxious to learn what he could from Spanish efforts, did not believe that any passage south of the equator could yield the best possible route to Cathay. He was convinced that the way by the north was open, and the globe showed that the distance to be traversed in that direction would be much shorter. Moreover, it would be an English route, to which his countrymen could lay as strong a claim as could the Spaniards and Portuguese to the South West and South East Passages respectively. This idea of the monopoly of sea-routes, claimed as strictly as if they were territorial areas, is characteristic of English thought in the sixteenth century. Many a man was willing to admit the exclusive right of Portugal to trade with Asia by the Cape of Good Hope, but held that if his countrymen could arrive at the same regions by a northern passage they would be perfectly entitled to do so. Philip II of Spain, ordinarily a stiff defender of the extreme Iberian monopoly, yielded to the doctrine of the exclusive route when, as consort of Queen Mary, he gave his countenance to the English company formed to search for the North East Passage. Thorne therefore took the opportunity of explaining his scheme when the ambassador sent to him for information on the new spice trade.

The date of this "Book to Doctor Lee" is given only as 1527, but it can be assigned on internal evidence to the early part of that year. There is a reference to the Spanish expedition of 1526 as having sailed "in April last past", and this could not have been written later than April, 1527. If we might further assume that Robert Thorne used the English calendar it would follow that his date of writing was after March 24, since otherwise he would have described it as 1526. But this is not certain, for Englishmen in Spain sometimes dated by the Spanish calendar, which began the new year in January.

Thorne filled most of his communication with an inaccurate historical sketch of Portuguese and Spanish discoveries and a review of the controversy then proceeding on the ownership of the Spice Islands. He enclosed a world-map to illustrate his remarks, and gave an elaborate description of it. He admitted that he was not an expert cartographer, and his map is in fact a poor effort.[1] The significance of its inscriptions on the north-western region has already been considered.[2] Thorne's remarks on the discoveries include some unsubstantiated stories on Hispano-Portu-

[1] It is perhaps not fair to say this, for in the form in which we have it, as printed in Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages*, it bears signs of having been edited.

[2] See above, pp. 222–3.

guese relations. They have some value as an indication of the notions then current in mercantile circles. The significance of the Bulls of Alexander VI, as conferring two monopolies covering the whole world, has been attacked in recent years, and it is therefore interesting to note that in 1527 that was certainly the interpretation placed upon them and upon the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494. After all it is the contemporary interpretation that is historically important, and it would seem that the disparagement of the old meaning attached to the Bulls has been carried too far. As late as 1562 Sir William Cecil told a Spanish ambassador that "the Pope had no right to partition the world and to give and take kingdoms to whomever he pleased".[1] The same objection is implicit in Henry VII's grant to John Cabot, and in the Spanish government's remarks upon it.

In the latter part of the memorial Thorne proceeded to his own plan. He argued that from England northwards over the Pole to the Pacific Spice Islands in the equatorial latitude the distance was 2480 leagues,[2] whereas the Spanish route by the Strait of Magellan covered 6000 leagues and the Portuguese by the Cape 4300. New spice islands, he said, would undoubtedly be discovered in the tropics, and in addition the northern route would open a market for English cloth in the colder Tartary. He admitted the general belief that the northern ice was impassable, but asserted the contrary: "There is no land unhabitable, nor sea unnavigable".[3] He concluded that the thing ought to be tried: "If I had faculty to my will, it should be the first thing that I would understand, even to attempt, if our seas northward be navigable to the Pole, or no". In a postscript he retracted some of his confidence. "Though peradventure of troth it is not to be looked to, as a thing that by all opinions is unpossible, and I think never will come to effect: and therefore neither here nor elsewhere is it to be spoken of. For to move it amongst wise men, it should be had in derision. And therefore to none I would have written nor spoken of such things, but to your lordship, to whom boldly I commit in this all my foolish fantasy as to myself. But if it please God that into England I may come with your lordship, I will shew some conjectures of reason, though against the general opinion of cosmographers, by which shall appear this that I say not to lack some foundation."

The oft-quoted allusion to the discovery of the New Found Land by Hugh Elyot and the elder Robert Thorne occurs in this writing, and perhaps its most notable feature is the omission of any reference, not only

[1] *Calendar of Spanish State Papers, 1558–67*, No. 144.

[2] Hakluyt's 2489 is a misprint.

[3] Hakluyt prints "innavigable".

to John Cabot, but also to Sebastian, who was in command of the expedition in which the writer had embarked two representatives and a large sum of money only a year before.

At some time unknown Robert Thorne wrote on the above topics to Henry VIII himself.[1] The composition, entitled "A Declaration of the Indies", is shorter than that to Dr Lee, and of much more impressive literary quality. It bears no date, and the internal indications on the point are inconclusive. One phrase would place it very early: "And also now of late . . . your Grace in person passed with a great power into France, putting your Grace's person to great pain and labour, and without doubt victoriously you had conquered the said realm of France . . . ". This seems to be an allusion to the events of 1513, for in Henry's second French war, 1522–5, he did not cross the Channel in person. If the words were written after 1522, the "of late" seems a little unsuitable; and yet that they were so written appears from another passage which alludes to Magellan's voyage: "For out of Spain they have discovered all the Indies and seas occidental, and out of Portugal all the Indies and seas oriental: so that by this part of the Orient and Occident, they have compassed the world. For the one of them departing toward the Orient and the other toward the Occident, met again in the course or way of the middest of the day". This could hardly have been said before Magellan crossed the Pacific. A third indication may be interpreted so as to date the writing after the autumn of 1527: "Though heretofore your Grace hath made thereof [of the northern discovery] a proof, and found not the commodity thereby as you trusted, at this time it shall be no impediment. For there may be now provided remedies for things then lacked, and the inconveniencies and lets removed, that then were the cause that your Grace's desire took no full effect, which is, the courses to be changed, and followed the foresaid new courses". This may be a reference to Rut's failure, in which case it was written after his return; but it may be only an allusion to the fiasco of 1521. It is to be noted that this "Declaration" to the king contains no mention of the 1526 expedition from Seville, such as serves to fix the date of the memorial to Dr Lee. On the other hand, Thorne said nothing to Lee of having already written to the king. We should expect an allusion to it if he had done so. And indeed, the implication of the postscript to Lee, quoted above, is that the writer was disburdening himself of his "foolish fantasy" for the first time. On the whole therefore

[1] For a discussion of the date of this writing, and on the relation of Thorne's ideas to those of Roger Barlow, see a paper by Miss E. G. R. Taylor in *Geographical Journal*, vol. lxxiii.

it would seem that the "Declaration of the Indies" was written after the memorial to Lee, and probably after the return of John Rut.

Its exposition of Thorne's northern project is much more clearly put. It is very "clear and certain" that ships may navigate the polar seas without any great impediment. The continuous daylight of the arctic summer will be an advantage. The dangerous zone round the Pole is not very extensive, "two or three (*sic*) leagues before they come to the Pole, and as much more after they pass the Pole".[1] Once having sailed across the Pole the voyagers will have a choice of three courses: down the coast of Asia to Tartary and China, and thence to "Cathaio Oriental", which may mean northern China, wrongly placed south of China proper; or "in the back side of the New Found Land", and so to the western coast of tropical America; or midway between the two, to the islands of the Pacific, under the equator, where "without doubt they shall find the richest lands and islands of the world, of gold, precious stones, balms, spices and other things that we here esteem most". A dazzling prospect for an adventurous king.

It will now be clear that Thorne's writings were not the cause of Rut's expedition. The exhortation to Dr Lee was produced in the first quarter of 1527, too late, when we allow for delays in transmission, to influence the preparation of the project launched in May. The advice to the king was probably later. But even if earlier, it was not followed by Rut. For Rut sailed to the west and then north-west, and not due north towards the Pole. And if we take Thorne literally we may read him as disapproving of Rut's procedure: "the courses to be changed, and followed the foresaid new courses". The Bristol expeditions of 1501–5 (and possibly later) were in the background of Thorne's mind. He was twelve years old in 1504, and his father, who had taken part in those projects, had lived until he himself came to manhood. He must have known their full history, and his proposals of 1527 cast a faint light upon it. They show that the Company Adventurers to the New Found Land had not failed to find a northern passage because its ships had been stopped by a solid ice barrier. On the contrary, the physical conditions must have appeared promising, and the abandonment of the enterprise had been due to other reasons, most likely financial. Such was destined also to be the story of the efforts of Frobisher and Davis under Elizabeth. It was not until the reign of Charles I that English explorers became satisfied that an arctic passage was commercially impracticable. Even a hundred and fifty years after that

[1] Miss Taylor shows that "two or three" is a copyist's error for "two or three hundred".

the scheme revived, and Cook from the Pacific side made a determined effort to probe the passage in 1778.

Robert Thorne was a large-minded man. He was rich enough to leave nearly £17,000 at his death, a great sum for those days, and he was lavish in a good cause. He never saw again a penny of the 1400 ducats he subscribed to the Spanish voyage of 1526, and his object in the investment was gain of knowledge rather than of profit. He died on Whitsunday, 1532, and was buried in St Christopher's, London, under this epitaph:[1]

Robertus cubat hic Thornus, mercator honestus,
Qui sibi legitimas arte paravit opes:
Huic vitam dederat puero Bristollia quondam,
Londinum hoc tumulo clauserat atque diem,
Ornavit studiis patriam, virtutibus auxit,
Gymnasium erexit sumptibus ipse suis.
Lector quisquis ades requiem cineri precor optes,
Supplex et precibus numina flecte tuis.
Obiit 1532, aetatis vero suae anno 40.

[1] Barrett's *Antiquities of Bristol* (1789), p. 650, gives the epitaph. The authority is not stated, but the facts are corroborated by Thorne's will in Cotton MSS., Vitellius A xvi, f. 209 b, which mentions the date of death and a bequest of £400 to the school at Bristol.

CHAPTER XII

THE VOYAGE OF 1536

For the last American voyage of the early English series we have only one authority, the story given in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. It tells more than any other of the personal experiences of the adventurers, but it does not give a satisfactory account of the regions visited, and this is the more noticeable since Hakluyt obtained his information from the lips of one of the participants whom he rode two hundred miles to see.

The organizer was one Master Hore, a gentleman of London whose Christian name is nowhere given. He was of good stature and great courage, and given to the study of cosmography. With the king's patronage he gathered thirty others of his own rank to engage in a discovery of "the north-west (*sic*) parts of America". Knowing what we do of the thought of the period, we may surmise that an Asiatic passage was one of the motives. But prospecting for a colonial site may have been included, since interest in the St Lawrence basin had been aroused by the discoveries of Jacques Cartier begun two years before.

The explorers employed two ships, the *Trinity* of 140 tons, and the *Minion*, and crews amounting to ninety sailors. The thirty gentlemen adventurers included one or two whose names are of interest. Master Rastell, "Serjeant Rastell's brother", was a son of the John Rastell of 1517 and the *New Interlude*. He himself was named John, and the serjeant William.[1] Armigil Wade became Clerk to the Council under Henry VIII and Edward VI. Oliver Dawbeny survived to be a well-known London merchant who engaged in the newly-opened Barbary trade in the early years of Elizabeth.

The expedition sailed from Gravesend at the close of April, 1536, and was two months at sea before sighting land at Cape Breton towards the end of June. From that point, says Hakluyt, they shaped their course north-eastwards until they came to the Isle of Penguin. This precludes an entry into the Gulf of St Lawrence and indicates a coasting of Newfoundland northwards. The Isle of Penguin is mentioned in Edward Haie's account of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's voyage in 1583. Its position is there given as off the Newfoundland coast somewhat north of Conception Bay. Haie agrees with the voyagers of 1536 in stating that large numbers of the fowl were to be caught with great ease and made excellent

[1] A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama*, pp. 27, 72, 73–9.

victual. It is at this point that Hakluyt's story becomes unsatisfactory. He has hitherto been working on the authority of Thomas Butts, the veteran whom he personally interviewed. He now changes over to Oliver Dawbeny, whom he had not known, but who had given some particulars to the editor's cousin, another Richard Hakluyt, described as of the Middle Temple. Dawbeny said that "after their arrival in Newfoundland" they saw some savages, but failed to get into touch with them; and then that, "lying there", they grew very short of victuals and were faced with death from starvation.

Now, it is fairly evident that the change of authority has led to a break in the sense. Dawbeny's "there" can hardly be the Isle of Penguin, where flesh and eggs were to be had for the taking. The question is, where was it? The general locality "Newfoundland" is not much help, for the word was loosely used to cover the Labrador coast as well as the island; they were not indeed known to be discontinuous. If the expedition had any definite purpose other than a desire of the gentlemen to see strange regions, the northward course from Cape Breton suggests a quest of the North West Passage. Dawbeny's description agrees with southern Labrador, for he says the soil bore chiefly fir and pine trees. At the present day there is continuous forest up to 53°, and thence it grows more scanty until at 58° the limit of trees is reached.[1] If the expedition pushed northwards, failed to make much progress, and was for some reason delayed at a foodless point on the Labrador coast we have an explanation of the tragedy that followed. The tragedy was cannibalism. The supplies of flesh were exhausted, and the land yielded nothing but herbs and roots. A few satisfied their pangs by watching the nest of an osprey and taking the fish which she caught for her young. "But, the famine increasing, and the relief of herbs being to little purpose to satisfy their insatiable hunger, in the fields and deserts here and there the fellow killed his mate while he stooped to take up a root for his relief, and cutting out pieces of his body whom he had murdered, broiled the same on the coals and greedily devoured them".

The officers at length discovered the cause of these disappearances, and Hore made an impressive speech to the company, saying that death was preferable to murder, and exhorting to prayer and repentance. Nevertheless the misery continued, and an agreement was made to regulate cannibalism by drawing lots for death, when a French ship arrived on the coast. This was at some time in September, if we allow a month or

[1] S. E. Dawson, in Stanford's *Compendium* (1897).

more for the voyage home. The fishery, as Haie tells us, was generally ended in July, and this Frenchman must have been providentially belated. The starving Englishmen mastered the French "by policy", victualled themselves, and sailed home. They reached St Ives at the end of October.

Next year the French came to England to complain. The king "was so moved with pity that he punished not his subjects, but of his own purse made full and royal recompense unto the French". It seems likely that the case had first been investigated in the Admiralty Court, which dealt with robberies at sea. I have searched for some trace of it, but have found none; the H.C.A. records are very incomplete for this early period. I have printed as the last item among our texts an extract from André Thevet. It is his usual spineless jumble, about a voyage made under "King Henry", without mention even of the numeral. The two whole months in which the expedition is said to have remained in an estuary correspond with the period mid-July to mid-September during which Hore may have starved on the Labrador coast, but otherwise there is nothing to identify the accounts. Thevet may be speaking of Sebastian Cabot or of John Rut, or of no one in particular. He has been aptly described as the Sir John Mandeville of the sixteenth century.

We are thus left with Hakluyt only, and it is not Hakluyt at his best. He would himself have criticized this account if he had found it in another man's book. It is hard to believe that when he interviewed Thomas Butts he did not elicit a complete narrative of the voyage. He had a systematic mind and liked clear outlines. Yet he leaves Butts at the Isle of Penguin and switches the reader to the second-hand information of Richard Hakluyt the lawyer. My own suspicion is that the thing is an artifice to conceal an unwelcome tale of the difficulties of the North West. Hakluyt was a propagandist for the discovery of the Passage, and it was inexpedient to publish discouraging reports. If this explanation is not accepted the alternative is to regard Hore and his friends as almost incredible simpletons. They had money enough to provide a well-found expedition, they had plenty of experienced pilots for the Newfoundland waters to choose from, and they hung about and starved there in the midst of the most productive fishery in the world. One cannot believe it. They must have spent those two months in an attempt on the Passage, have outrun their food supplies, and then fallen back to the fishing-coast where they captured their French ship.

It is just possible that a fuller story may yet come to light. The municipal records of Rouen are known to contain information on the

voyages of the period. Some extracts have been published by French authors,[1] but the manuscripts are not easily accessible. La Rochelle also possesses sixteenth-century records. Those of Dieppe, a port that was then likewise very active, are said to have been destroyed by an English bombardment in the wars of William III and Louis XIV. It is to France, quite as much as to Spain and Portugal, that the attention of investigators of early oceanic history should be directed.

[1] For specimens of the material see particularly E. Gosselin, *Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la marine normande*, Rouen, 1876. Some general guidance may be derived from P. Gaffarel, *Histoire du Brésil français au seizième siècle*, Paris, 1878, and C. de la Roncière, *Histoire de la marine française*, Vol. III.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LATER CAREER OF SEBASTIAN CABOT[1]

THE history of Sebastian Cabot has been followed to the point when in 1523 the plan for him to serve his native Venice was abandoned. It was at this time that his position in Spain became more important. He had thrown in his lot with that country in 1512 in the hope of being appointed to lead a voyage in search of a western passage. The enterprise had been postponed, and then relinquished on the death of King Ferdinand. Charles V had retained Sebastian and had created him Pilot-Major in 1518. But it was Magellan who sailed in 1519 in command of the expedition which was destined to accomplish the greatest feat of navigation the world had yet witnessed. Sebastian Cabot had been passed over. Just as, on his disappointment in 1516, he had in all probability sought to return to English employment, so in 1520–1 he certainly did the like, and in 1522–3 tried for an outlet for his energies by way of Venice. The return of the *Victoria* in 1522 with news of the South West Passage and the circumnavigation of the world led to an argument over the location and ownership of the Moluccas. It was a business to be settled by the diplomatists, with the geographers as expert advisers. It was carried on in 1523–4, and the Pilot-Major's services must have been held indispensable. Hence his inability to proceed with the Venetian intrigue. Then, in 1524, it was settled that he should have the command of a Spanish expedition, and the preparations went forward, although the plan did not come to the stage of action until 1526.

Charles V was in Spain during these years, and it was to his personal choice that Sebastian owed his command. That fact should count for something in our estimation, for the Emperor was a cool judge of men. Sebastian has been so savagely attacked as a liar, a fool and an ignoramus that one is tempted to go too far in the other direction in seeking to redress the balance. I believe it to be a just estimate to say of him that while as a professional geographer he stood (in the opinion of contemporary judges) in the first rank, he failed to reach that rank as a man of action. But that is not to say that he was a failure. He was above the average. The generation that produced Albuquerque, Magellan and Cortes, and tasks worthy of their mettle, set a high standard which it is idle to pretend that Sebastian Cabot attained. These men moulded circumstance with iron hands;

[1] The reader should note that this chapter does not profess to deal with every detail of Cabot's later life on the scale that has been adopted for his North American projects.

Sebastian waited upon it and often waited in vain. He displayed ability, pluck and determination, but too much of the suppleness supposed to be characteristic of the Italian. He influenced his time but did not command it. As for his morality, it was that of most men, neither black nor white, but grey.

The plan for the southern expedition took shape in September, 1524, and the preparations went on through the following year. The money was for the most part subscribed by the merchants of Seville, although the Emperor contributed a share. A government expedition under Garcia de Loaysa sailed in 1525 to follow up Magellan's work in the Spice Islands. It would seem that the merchants who employed Sebastian Cabot intended that his objective should be the same, but that Charles V had not a single eye to mercantile profit. He wished to utilize the venture for a purpose of state in addition, a more thorough exploration of the South American continent than had yet been achieved. The merchants were alarmed at the prospective perversion of their investment, and the Emperor was determined to get his geographical work cheaply done.[1] Hence from the outset there were intrigues and cross-purposes that fatally weakened the command. When the Emperor's design was penetrated the merchants tried to displace Cabot, but Charles insisted on retaining him. The merchants then took care to ship a number of officers devoted to their interests to act as watch-dogs upon the commander-in-chief. One is reminded of the accepted version of the Drake and Doughty story. But Cabot had more than one Doughty to contend with and could not dispose of his difficulty by a single stroke of the axe. He sailed in April, 1526, with an ostensible commission to pass the Straits of Magellan, but in all probability with a secret instruction to examine the country at the head of the River Plate estuary. Juan de Solis had entered the estuary in 1515, and his work had left little hope of a sea passage being found by that way. But the west coast with its Andean wall had not yet been seen by the Spaniards, who had done little more than cross the Isthmus of Panama. There was a large tract of unknown country which might prove more easily approachable by the Plate than by Panama. The thing obviously needed investigation, but we can understand the annoyance of the merchants on finding their capital diverted from a certainty to a chance.

With four ships and some two hundred men Cabot sailed southwards to the Canaries, and thence to the Cape Verde Islands. He then steered south-south-west instead of south. His critics declared that the course

[1] Cf. Harrisse (1896), pp. 185–90, and Winship, *Cabot Bibliography*, pp. xxiii–iv.

revealed his incompetence as a navigator, but it may have been influenced by the secret purpose with which he had been charged. Its result was that he touched the Brazilian continent in the neighbourhood of Pernambuco and that the prevailing currents and contrary winds kept him jammed against the coast and made the southward passage a wearisome and perilous business. The winds on this coast blow six months from the north-east and six months from the south, and Cabot arrived in the wrong half of the year. Whether he ought to have known this in advance or whether the hostile witnesses were merely wise after the event we cannot tell. Portuguese and Frenchmen had long been frequenting these seas, although Spaniards had not; but the Pilot-Major of Spain had better opportunities than most men for collecting information. It took three months to coast from Pernambuco to Cape Frio and a month more to reach the island of Santa Catalina in 27° S. Here the flagship was lost by striking a rock. Several witnesses stated that Cabot was the first to leave the ship whilst others tried to save her cargo, and he seems not to have answered the accusation. If a modern commander so acted he would be charged with cowardice, and it may be that Sebastian yielded to panic as his enemies alleged. But in the sixteenth century the ethics of command were not well established. Boys were not brought up from the cradle on tales of unselfish heroism; they were rather taught to admire successful egoism. And the circumstances of this expedition were peculiar in that the commander knew that if he perished his successors would not carry out his purpose. Subsequent events do not bear out the theory of cowardice, and it is more likely that he acted in the spirit of Machiavelli's Prince. He never professed to be a Bayard.

On the coast there were found Portuguese settlers and some Spanish survivors of De Solis' expedition. All agreed that the basin of the Plate was extraordinarily rich in the precious metals, although it was an assertion lacking proof. Whatever Cabot may have thought, it was to him a useful piece of news, for it rendered more acceptable his decision to explore the estuary. The opposition objected but did not prevail. It was intolerable that some of the principal officers should be openly resisting the commander's authority, and on sailing from Santa Catalina he marooned the ringleaders with a supply of arms and food. Magellan had hanged his mutineers in like conditions. Cabot's eventually came home to denounce him. The loss of the flagship had caused a long delay, and it was not until February, 1527, that the expedition entered the River Plate. For six months they explored the estuary and then built a headquarters fort at the point where the strictly river navigation began and the large ships

had to be left. Cabot installed a garrison and himself took command of the exploring party that was to push up-stream. It was now completely evident that there was no salt-water strait through the continent, but the reports of gold and the example of Cortes urged Cabot on. His motive was conquest as much as discovery, and he did not lightly abandon it. He went up the Paraná until its course bent to the eastward. But the gold was supposed, as ever, to be in the west, and he therefore ascended the Paraguay in that direction after establishing a second fort downstream at Sancti Spiritus. There had already been skirmishing with the Indians and a steady undercurrent of disaffection in the Spanish force. Disloyalty was inevitable in view of the antecedents of the expedition. Cabot barely kept it under, and in this matter compares unfavourably with the best commanders of his day. He was in ordinary life a man of considerable tact and charm of manner. But these qualities were assumed rather than innate, and on active service they wore thin. He proved himself a driver rather than a leader, and relied upon terror to maintain an ascendancy he would not win by goodwill. Twice at least on this river journey he stopped to hang recalcitrant members of his small band. At length his advanced party fell into an ambush and lost from twenty to thirty men. There was no food to be had from the exultant Indians, and Cabot fell back to his nearest fort.

He was reorganizing with the intention to try again, having been already a year in the River Plate, when in March, 1528, a new Spanish expedition arrived in the estuary. Its commander, Diego Garcia, had been, like Cabot, sent out by a merchant syndicate. But he had started with orders to explore the River Plate, in ignorance that Cabot was already doing so. The two men met but did not effect a cordial union, since they were inevitably in competition. Cabot went back to his headquarters at the estuary to send home one of his ships for reinforcements, whilst Garcia pushed on to buy his experience in the interior.

The ship sent by Cabot reached Europe in October, 1528, carrying, amongst others, Roger Barlow, one of the Englishmen whom Thorne had embarked in the voyage. The other, Henry Latimer, remained in the Plate to the end. By the 1528 vessel Cabot sent home glowing accounts of the wealth in prospect and an urgent demand for men and food. But his mercantile backers washed their hands of him. They could reasonably contend that it was now the Emperor's business, not theirs. Charles V ordered relief to be sent, but it was never done. Cabot waited in the estuary for about a year, and in the early part of 1529 tried again with his own resources. What Garcia was doing is not precisely apparent, but

he did not share in the disaster now suffered by Cabot.[1] This was the storm of Sancti Spiritus by the Indians, with the massacre of nearly all its garrison. Cabot had been up to the place and was temporarily absent when it was lost. He was apprised of the catastrophe by a few survivors and hurried back to find nothing but mangled bodies half eaten by the savages. He took away the guns, which the victors had left untouched, and went down to the estuary. Here, with a remnant of his force, he was on the defensive, for the news had spread and the local tribes rose against him. More than twenty Spaniards were killed here. The game was up, and none can say that it had not been played to the end. Three years of hardship, fighting and desertion had reduced the two hundred to a handful, and they sailed for Spain in November, 1529.

They made the homeward passage in leisurely fashion, halting to forage along the coast, and buying fifty Indian slaves in Brazil. Garcia gave up at the same time, and the two commanders sailed part of the way together; but they parted company before leaving Brazil, after which Garcia picked up at least one of the officers marooned in 1526. Cabot arrived at Seville witht wenty-four men in July, 1530, well knowing that there was music to be faced.

As soon as he stepped ashore it began. He had disobeyed the only instructions he could show, had done as many arbitrary acts as had Cortes, had committed what had been military executions beyond the line but could be described as murders in Spanish courts, was hated by all, and had no gold to buy forgiveness. He was tried on various counts and sentenced to heavy fines and four years' banishment at Oran, where he was to serve against the Moors at his own expense. It was no more than fair retribution upon the commander of an expedition for the Moluccas, a destination which he had failed to reach by his own wilful act against the protests of his officers. He had certainly betrayed his employers and lost them their money. But what of the Emperor? The Emperor had been well served. He had had a necessary piece of exploration done at small cost to himself, and his action shows what he thought of it all. He disregarded the banishment and sent Cabot back to his Pilot-Major's office at Seville. He allowed the fines to be deducted from salary, but made royal donations to the culprit in lieu.[2] Charles V was a just man when there was not too much at stake, and he knew better than to break a good tool.

[1] He had carried out some operations in conjunction with Cabot. For the full story see J. T. Medina, *El Veneciano Sebastián Caboto al servicio de España*, Chaps. XIV–XVI.

[2] Winship, *Bibliography*, p. xxi.

The late Mr Harrisse devoted considerable space in his second memoir on the Cabots to the history of this expedition.[1] His summing-up is adverse to Sebastian. He holds that the choice of the course to Pernambuco was due to ignorance of navigation, and that the decision to explore the River Plate was taken only after reaching Brazil. He shows that the merchant syndicate objected to Cabot's appointment some time before the start, but that the Emperor insisted on his being placed in command. The witnesses at the subsequent trials testified to all these things, but it should be noted that even if they had guessed at a secret understanding between Cabot and his sovereign they could not very well have said so. Of that there is not, and most likely never was, any documentary evidence. Harrisse ignores the point, but its probability rests on Charles V's subsequent protection of the commander. He may have remitted the banishment because Cabot was useful as Pilot-Major (although there were competent Spanish aspirants to that position), but why should he have advanced money for the fines unless morally bound to do so? It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Charles V was the real wrecker of the Spice Islands voyage and that on the whole he considered it a voyage well lost. Apart from policy, the gravest count against Cabot as a man is his conduct at the loss of the flagship. The details are illuminating. Cabot saw they were running into danger and ordered the anchor to be dropped. The master and pilot flatly disobeyed him, carried on, and wrecked the ship. Cabot and his adherents then took to the boat and left the delinquents to get out of the mess as best they could. It was not the act of a great commander rising magnanimously to the occasion, but it looks more like vindictive temper than cowardice. The personal peril may not have been great, for after all no one was drowned. The voyage up to that point had been a succession of naggings and disputes over trifles. A steward had refused to issue some wine on his captain's order because the admiral had given a counter-order, and this incident alone had made a first-class quarrel that divided the fleet, with either party invoking the sacred authority of the Holy Roman Emperor. In the subsequent campaigns on the Plate even Harrisse admits that Cabot played the man: "There is no proof that from this time Cabot failed to conduct himself as a competent and energetic commander. On the contrary, so far as we know, for the question was not raised when he was tried before the Council of the Indies, Cabot behaved gallantly and maintained to the last the strictest discipline.... Cabot's returning, notwithstanding swarms of fierce Indians,

[1] *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1896), pp. 185–269.

to the fort of Spiriti Sanctus to recover his heavy artillery immediately after suffering such a bloody defeat, exhibits an unwavering firmness, which contrasts favourably with his behaviour at the time of the shipwreck". That the question was not raised, when the whole pack of disappointed speculators were in full cry after their quarry, is evidence enough in itself.

A successful commander needs more than courage and wits, he needs luck. That was what Sebastian Cabot lacked. If the westward passage had existed he would have discovered it. If the gold had been there he would have got it. So much we can say with confidence, and the whole was a feasible risk to take. With a shipload of gold he would have been a *conquistador*. With only a long casualty list he was a failure—and, what was worse in the Spain of that day, a foreign interloper as well.

For some years after his return Cabot carried on the routine of his office without being involved in affairs of historical note. He gave instruction in navigation and cosmography, examined candidates for pilot's certificates, kept the official maps up to date, supervised the construction of instruments, and acted as an expert witness in geographical inquiries. It is on record that he made various important maps, but not one has been preserved that can be fully identified as his.

The planisphere of 1544, now in Paris, bears inscriptions claiming his authorship. The difficulty in literally accepting them is that the map is incorrect in matters on which we know him to have been well informed. We may disregard the region of the North West Passage, which is nothing like that in the later Cabot maps seen by Willes and Gilbert, on the reasonable assumption that in 1544 he did not choose to publish his discovery. For these coasts the Paris Map is a poor copy of existing French material. But there was no reason for falsifying the facts about the River Plate and its affluents, and the map does not correctly delineate districts that Cabot had personally traversed. If he consented to its publication under his name he was curiously careless of his reputation. Perhaps he did not foresee the minute investigation of his career that a future age was to carry out! But his connexion with the document is but vaguely established. Possibly it was a publisher's idea for a best-seller with an eminent name attached, and the eminent person, having taken his fee, allowed the work to be done by a hack. Again, it may well be that contemporaries did not take maps of this sort as seriously as we are tempted to do. The thing was largely sold for parlour decoration—we hear of its presence in many merchants' houses—and it was in a different category from the pilots' charts made for real navigation. With the Paris Map goes the question of

the legends that accompanied it. That relating to John Cabot's discovery seems authentic when tested by independent evidence. Some of the others contain a good deal of fiction about dog-faced men and flap-eared monstrosities, quite in keeping with the popular appeal that may be hypothecated for the whole production. The conclusion of an authority on maps is "that the Paris Map of 1544 is not Cabot's in any sense that would make him responsible for its accuracy, that it was not published or prepared in Spain, that he never corrected the proofs, but that he probably contributed in some measure to the material from which its unknown author compiled it".[1] It is impossible to be dogmatic about the evidence of maps unless we know more than we commonly do about the intention and circumstances of those who drew them.

Sebastian Cabot, like other navigators of his time, was much exercised by the problem of determining longitude. He had also collected observations on the variation of the compass in different regions, and he evolved a theory that by the use of a suitably constructed chart the longitude might be deduced from the variation. His assumption was that the lines of equal magnetic variation coincided with meridians, a fallacy that Columbus also seems to have entertained. Variation has since been found to be a much more recondite matter; but in those days of incomplete statistics the idea was certainly worth following up, and Cabot's speculations do not deserve the ridicule that has been poured upon them. He also worked upon another method based upon the comparison of the sun's declination at mid-day at the point of observation with its declination at a known datum-point such as Seville, to be obtained from tables previously drawn up. After making a correction for latitude a small difference would be found between the Seville declination and that of the point of observation, such difference being due to the change of declination during the fraction of a year that had elapsed in the sun's apparent passage between the two points. Thus the difference of local time between the two points would be established and the longitude determined.[2] This method remained purely theoretical owing to the imperfection of the instruments available. When lying on his deathbed Cabot told his friend Richard Eden that he had learned by divine revelation a method of finding longitude, yet in such a manner that he might not teach it to any other man. Eden concluded

[1] S. E. Dawson, "Voyages of the Cabots", etc., in *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Ottawa, 1895, pp. 51–112.

[2] Harrisse gives this method in full detail on the authority of Alonso de Santa Cruz, whose MS. he prints. See *John and Sebastian Cabot* (1896), pp. 301–8, 454–6.

that the old man "somewhat doted".[1] Perhaps he was merely too feeble to give a scientific discourse.

In the latter years of Henry VIII the English effort to discover North America died out. So far as is known, the last government undertaking was that of Rut in 1527. Hore's voyage was a private enterprise whose motives are not at all clear. In 1541 we hear of a royal project which never went beyond the stage of discussion. Chapuys, the Emperor's ambassador, reported on May 26 that the Privy Council had been deliberating on the dispatch of two ships to seek a passage between Iceland and Greenland "for the northern regions" (Cathay is not specified), where it was thought that there would be a market for English cloth. A pilot from Seville had been in England, but his terms had been too high, and the government had therefore abandoned the scheme.[2] If Chapuys was speaking with precision, which is by no means certain, this plan has some affinity with Thorne's doctrines. There is little reason to suppose that the Seville pilot was Sebastian Cabot, who is not known ever to have advocated the northern route over the pole. The English fishery in Newfoundland probably continued during these years, although there is little positive evidence of it. It is mentioned allusively in statutes of 1541 and 1548 which regulated the fishing industry in general.

North America, as has been abundantly shown, was only incidentally attractive to Englishmen by reason of its bearing on the Asiatic Passage. The incentive to colonization, which became important under Elizabeth, was not yet manifest, although the conditions that were to produce it were coming into existence. Those conditions were briefly the rise of prices due to the influx of the precious metals into Europe, the general depression of trade resulting from the wars in which England was involved from 1544 onwards, and the uprooting of the peasantry from the soil consequent upon the dissolution of the monasteries. These things caused distress and unemployment, a sense of over-population, and a need for new markets for the cloth manufacture. The excess of population was more apparent than real. Numbers were certainly growing after having been almost stationary since the Black Death, but the population of England and Wales was not much higher than four millions at the end of the sixteenth century, a figure which had been comfortably reached in the early fourteenth. The problem was solved by the reorganization of agriculture and industry under Elizabeth and James I, and colonization did not in fact draw off

[1] R. Eden, *A very necessarie and profitable Booke concerning Navigation* (translation from Johannes Taisnierus, Cologne), London, c. 1577, epistle dedicatory.

[2] *Calendar of Spanish State Papers*, VI, No. 163.

any appreciable fraction of the supposed surplus. Meanwhile there was a bad period of social unhappiness in the generation from 1540 to 1570, and the expansion of overseas markets was pursued as the most obvious remedy. It has a bearing upon the later career of Sebastian Cabot. In his earlier life he and his father had been concerned with the attempt to enhance England's wealth by acquiring a share in the spice trade. Success would have brought additional luxury, but failure did not spell disaster to a well-rooted economic system. After 1540 the unsettlement of the economic system was itself a disaster, and trade expansion was no longer a luxury but a necessity. The emphasis, as shown by Chapuys' report of 1541, was rather upon the sale of cloth than the purchase of spices, and overseas enterprise after some delay assumed a much more determined form than in the earlier period.

In 1538 Sebastian Cabot offered to re-enter the English service. He approached Sir Thomas Wyatt, the ambassador in Spain, with a request to be recommended to Henry VIII.[1] The international situation was at that time growing very threatening, and Henry was faced with the possibility of invasion by a European coalition. All his surplus revenue was being spent on the Navy and coast defence, and he made no bid for Cabot's services. Cabot himself had very likely the North West Passage in mind. He was now well over fifty, and the period was approaching when he would be no longer able to lead an expedition in person. He had to wait ten years longer, by which time his sea-going days were at an end. In 1548 he attained his desire and quitted Spain, to pass his last decade in the England of Edward VI and Mary. The exact date of his transference is unknown, but is approximately indicated by the grant of an annual pension to commence from Michaelmas, 1548.[2]

For the first five years his English employments can only be inferred. Hakluyt describes him as Grand Pilot of England, but the title was certainly unofficial. His high repute is, however, attested by the amount of his pension, which was £166. 13*s*. 4*d*. per annum. His lost maps of this period, of which descriptions have already been quoted, indicate that he was working for a north-western expedition. English statesmen, it would seem, preferred something less scrupulous but more likely to yield immediate profit, and some time before the summer of 1553 the Duke of Northumberland was planning to attack Peru by an expedition that was to advance up the valley of the Amazon.[3] The great river was then

[1] *Letters and Papers*, XIII, pt. ii, pp. 411–15.

[2] Hakluyt, Maclehose edition, Vol. VII, pp. 156–7.

[3] Navarette, *Documentos inéditos*, Vol. III, p. 512.

unoccupied, for Portugal did not take possession until the following century. But Spanish explorers had traversed its course, and Cabot doubtless knew what they had discovered. The Amazon is navigable to the foot of the Andes, and the project was just possible. It would have needed a leader of heroic mould and followers as fever-proof as the early *conquistadores*. There is little reason to suppose that the inexperienced English of that day would have made a success of it. The plan was abortive, probably owing to Northumberland's fall. Cabot had been consulted, and notified Charles V after the Duke's death. The Emperor had given no permission for his Pilot-Major to leave Spain. In 1549 he demanded his return. Edward VI's Council replied that Cabot was an English subject and could be sent back only with his own consent. This is no doubt the origin of Sebastian's false statements that he was of English birth; and in the circumstances he cannot be very greatly blamed. When Mary mounted the throne in 1553 and married the Emperor's son in the following year, there was another attempt to recall Cabot from his truancy. His position became more perilous, and it was then that he curried favour by revealing the Peru project. If not honourable, the betrayal was by that time harmless, for the scheme was dead.[1]

Before the accession of Mary, Cabot had already found a task of enduring value. In the spring of 1553 it was decided to attempt the North East Passage in order to open a trade with Cathay. Some two hundred persons, noblemen, courtiers and merchants, formed themselves into a joint-stock company, the first of its kind to be organized in England on a large scale and with public recognition. The capital was £6000 divided into £25 shares. The officers comprised a governor, consuls, and assistants, and a grant of incorporation was issued by Edward VI. The document has not been preserved, and its terms are unknown, but its existence is proved by an allusion in Sebastian Cabot's ordinances for the voyage, written in 1553. Cabot was evidently the expert adviser, and was appointed Governor of the Company.

That fact has led to a serious misconception of his position in England, originated by a statement in Campbell's eighteenth-century *Lives of the British Admirals* and repeated by modern writers such as Harrisse and Mr Winship. It is that he was Governor of the Merchants Adventurers. That title, used without qualification, means the regulated company of

[1] I am trying in these pages to give an uncoloured estimate of Sebastian Cabot. It may be unattractive to depict a character as not very good and not very bad, but that is what the evidence warrants. I must confess that my account of these matters in a former book was too greatly influenced by those of previous writers.

English merchants which controlled the cloth export to the Netherlands. It was engaged in these years in a struggle for supremacy with the London factory of the Hanseatic League, a long-drawn contest in which the English victory was concluded by a treaty of 1560. Campbell and the older authorities give Sebastian Cabot the credit for the success. Harrisse, whilst allowing that he was Governor, denies that he was the victor. In fact he was neither. He had nothing to do with the regulated Merchants Adventurers to the Low Countries. His company was the joint-stock corporation described above, a different concern; and its title was "The Merchants Adventurers of England for the Discovery of Lands, Territories, Isles, Dominions and Seignories unknown". In a few years this rigmarole gave place in general parlance to the shorter title of "The Muscovy Company", and it was afterwards forgotten that this body had once been known as the (extensively qualified) Merchants Adventurers. Hence the mistake about Sebastian Cabot's office.

Cabot's company sent out three ships under the command of Sir Hugh Willoughby and Richard Chancellor. They sailed in May, 1553, and were separated in a storm. Willoughby with two ships sailed north-east as far as Novaia Zemlia and then turned back to the Murman coast of Lapland. There he and all his men were frozen to death in the winter of 1553–4. Chancellor with the third vessel entered the White Sea, hitherto unknown, under the impression that it might lead to Cathay. Actually it led to Russia, and Chancellor travelled overland to Moscow, where he made a commercial treaty with the Czar. It was a substantial achievement, for the Hanseatic League, the owners of the Baltic seaports, had hitherto controlled European trade with Russia. Chancellor's discovery broke the monopoly, and on his return to England in 1554 his employers became the Muscovy Company and exported English cloth to the new market that had been so ardently desired. Sebastian Cabot continued to be Governor, even under the new charter granted by Philip and Mary in 1555. He did not neglect the original purpose of finding the North East Passage, and one of the last recorded scenes of his life is the farewell entertainment at Gravesend on the departure of an exploring expedition sent forth by the Company in 1556.[1] This little party consisted of ten men in the pinnace *Serchthrift* under Stephen Borough. It reached the Island of Vaigats beyond Novaia Zemlia, but failed to penetrate the Passage. The attempt was not renewed until 1580, long after Cabot's death.

That event is unrecorded, but in all probability it took place in 1557. He had been hale and hearty in the previous year, but he was now growing

[1] No. 11.

infirm. The documents printed by Mr Harrisse show that he drew the quarterly instalment of his pension personally in March. In May the grant was altered so as to make the money payable to Sebastian Cabot and William Worthington jointly, and to the survivor of them. In June the instalment was drawn on behalf of Cabot by the hands of Worthington, and in September by those of Worthington's servant Thomas Longworth. In December the payment was made to Worthington alone, "de annuitate sua". He was thus the survivor, and the inference is that Sebastian Cabot died in the last quarter of 1557. He was probably about seventy-three years old.

His life almost exactly coincided with the reigns of the first four Tudors and with the experimental period in which England struggled tentatively towards the destiny of maritime empire. In his boyhood he had seen, perhaps shared in, his father's simple project of sailing straight westwards to Cathay. In his youth he had probed the North West and believed he had found the Pacific. His prime had passed in Spanish service, with backward glances to his cherished Arctic secret. He had failed, although it was a gallant failure, in the River Plate. He had then settled down as an expert adviser in navigation and geography. In his old age, although his heart was in the North West, he had directed the first English enterprise to meet with solid success in the North East. To us he appears a lonely and mysterious figure, a man without a country, deprived of patriotism yet able to simulate it, of ingratiating manners and secret mind, admired by scholars and respected by the great, successful to the outward view, but a failure by the measure of his own ambitions. He was no sooner dead than the English made a legend of his name. His reputation grew until it reached exaggeration in the eighteenth century and had scarcely declined a hundred years ago. John Cabot was forgotten, and Sebastian was revered as the father of English commerce and naval supremacy. Modern research has bred disillusionment and swung the pendulum too far in the other direction. It is time now to steady it to rest.

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